



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

WEDNESDAY — 13 JUL 2022



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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	07/13 Inflation hits 9.1%, highest rate 41yrs
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/us-inflation-june-2022-consumer-price-index-11657664129?mod=hp_lead_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/us-inflation-june-2022-consumer-price-index-11657664129?mod=hp_lead_pos1</a>
GIST	<a href="#">U.S. inflation</a> reached 9.1% in June, its highest rate in nearly 41 years, the Labor Department said Wednesday.

Investor expectations of slowing economic growth world-wide have led to [a decline in commodity prices](#) in recent weeks, including for oil, copper, wheat and corn, after those prices rose sharply following [the Russian invasion of Ukraine](#). Retailers have warned of the need to discount goods, [especially apparel and home goods](#), that are out of sync with customer preferences as spending shifts to services and away from goods, and consumers [spend down elevated savings](#). Economists expect those developments to subdue price pressures in the coming months.

“There’s a pretty serious recession fear affecting a broad range of asset prices,” said Laura Rosner-Warburton, senior economist at MacroPolicy Perspectives.

Retailers’ ability to shed unwanted inventory could test whether pricing is returning to prepandemic patterns, Ms. Rosner-Warburton said. Some retailers, such as Target, have already said [they are planning big discounts](#). Others with robust warehouse capacity, such as [Walmart](#) Inc., could be more likely to hold on to their excess inventory, analysts say.

“It would be really important if we do see discounting return, because it would show that we weren’t that far away from the pre-Covid environment in terms of pricing behavior,” she said.

The Fed raised its interest-rate target [by 0.75 percentage point in June](#), the largest increase since 1994. Slowing demand is key to the Fed’s goal of restoring price stability in an economy that is still struggling with supply issues, but raising interest rates also elevates the risk of a recession.

The Fed is also trying to prevent [consumer expectations of higher inflation](#) becoming entrenched, since such expectations can be self-fulfilling. Fed Chairman Jerome Powell has said the central bank wants to see [clear evidence that price pressures are diminishing](#) before slowing or suspending rate increases.

Persistent [high inflation is putting a strain](#) on businesses and consumers who, after decades of price stability, aren’t used to it.

Dan Waag, 55 years old, the owner of Arlene’s Sunny Side Cafe in Alcester, S.D., made the difficult decision to close for a week after concluding that a drop in the number of customers was leaving the restaurant’s finances in the red.

“I know these are tough times with this inflation, little to no rain for the farmers, gas prices as high as they are,” he wrote to his customers on Facebook.

Mr. Waag attributes the slowing demand to a poor season for the corn and bean farmers in the area, and the added toll of higher gasoline prices that might make an outing to his restaurant an unaffordable luxury. He hasn’t changed his prices yet, but with his own rising costs and a drop in daily revenue from around \$600-\$700 to \$300-\$400, he feels he may have to soon.

By closing for a week, he said he is betting customers will realize the value of having a non-fast food restaurant in their town of around 800 people. “I’m trying to show people, ‘This is what it will be like if I have to stay closed,’ ” Mr. Waag said.

Consumer inflation expectations have improved somewhat, according to [a Federal Reserve Bank of New York survey](#) this week. Americans expect slower inflation increases over the longer run than they had in recent months. The bank said in its June Survey of Consumer Expectations that respondents see the annual inflation rate three years from now at 3.6%, down from their expectation in May of 3.9%. The bank also said respondents expect the annual inflation rate five years from now to be 2.8%, down from their May expectation of 2.9%.

Higher interest rates won’t have the same effect on all prices simultaneously, economists say. Costs such as mortgages and rents—a big part of household budgets—respond over time to the dampening effects of higher interest rates. [Housing inflation is important](#) because it represents around 40%

of core CPI and around 17% of [the Fed's preferred inflation gauge](#), the personal-consumption expenditures price index.

"High rents are really troubling because they're locked in once every year or once every two years, and that's what leads people to go ask their boss for higher wages," said Lara Rhame, chief U.S. economist for FS Investments.

Record home prices and higher mortgage rates in May made it the most expensive month since 2006 to buy a home. Those conditions are leading prospective buyers [to drop out of the market](#) for now. But with limited supply and continued demand, it may take months before housing prices see significant declines.

"We entered this year with so much more demand than supply—even with many home buyers unable to compete in the market, there's still a lot of buyers," said Bill Adams, chief economist at Comerica Bank.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/13 Lake Powell shrivels, hydropower in flux</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/13/lake-powell-drought-electricity">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/13/lake-powell-drought-electricity</a>
GIST	<p>Bob Martin, the deputy power manager at the Glen Canyon Dam, gestures at the band of whitish, chalky residue running along the steep canyon walls towering above the Colorado River.</p> <p>"That's where the water level used to be," says Martin. "It's fallen lower than even the lowest end of the scale thought possible when the dam was constructed."</p> <p>The miles-long "bathtub ring," bleached white by water over years, is a glaring symbol of the crisis unfolding at the Colorado River Basin, which is suffering its driest period for more than 12 centuries.</p> <p>At the epicentre of this slow-burn environmental disaster embroiling the US south- west is Lake Powell, an artificial reservoir on the Colorado River created through the flooding of Glen Canyon in 1963.</p> <p>Alongside Nevada's Lake Mead, Powell is one of the two largest reservoirs in the nation, holding 24 million acre feet of water and spanning the Arizona-Utah border, and together they provide a vital water supply to a combined <a href="#">40 million people</a> in the south-west. Lake Powell is also a major source of hydropower: the vast pressure of the Colorado River traveling through the Glen Canyon Dam's 15-foot pipes, which spins turbines and then powers eight generators, produces cheap and clean energy for as many as 5.8 million homes and businesses across seven states.</p> <p>But dwindling water levels at Lake Powell, which is currently <a href="#">at 28% of its 24 million acre-feet capacity</a>, have put the Glen Canyon Dam at risk. In March, water levels <a href="#">fell below 3,525 feet</a> – considered a critical buffer to protect hydropower – for the first time. If the lake drops just another 32 feet, the dam will no longer be able to generate power for the millions who rely on it.</p> <p>Such a calamity might not be far off. The Bureau of Reclamation, the US federal agency which manages the Colorado River's infrastructure, forecasts that even with significant proposed cuts to water allowances there is a <a href="#">23% chance</a> power production could halt at Glen Canyon Dam in 2024 due to low water levels and that it is within the realm of possibility that it will happen as soon as <a href="#">July 2023</a>.</p> <p>As the lake vanishes, water managers are scrambling to find a solution, including an unprecedented conservation order. But some worry that efforts may fall short as states battle over whatever water is available – foreshadowing fights for resources that are only set to intensify as drought further grips the arid Southwest.</p> <p>"It's a gigantic warning," says Lisa Meiman, a spokesperson for the <a href="#">Western Area Power Administration</a> (Wapa), a federal company that provides wholesale hydropower to 15 states through 57</p>

dams, including Glen Canyon. “The rapid decline of Lake Powell has been surprising. There’s no doubt we are heading towards a drier future.”

### **Sputtering electricity**

Lake Powell’s considerable power-generating abilities are already on the decline.

When the lake is full, its dam can produce [1,320 megawatts](#), or 5bn kilowatt-hours of power annually – about the same amount as a large fossil fuel plant. But with water levels now 100 feet below the lowest elevation marker, hydropower production has dropped to 800 megawatts.

The alarming drop has forced authorities into extraordinary action. On 14 June, the Bureau of Reclamation [announced](#) that to protect critical reservoir levels in 2023, between 2 and 4m acre-feet of water must be conserved, setting a 60-day timeline for state and tribal leaders to agree a plan. Water use estimates [released](#) in June show the upper basin states collectively used 3.5m acre-feet of Colorado River water last year, while the lower basin states used around 10m acre-feet.

“The system is at a tipping point,” Commissioner Camille Touton told the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. “Unprecedented is now the reality and the normal in which Reclamation must manage our systems.”

According to [Jack Schmidt](#), the Janet Quinney Lawson Chair of Colorado River Studies at Utah State University, that would be the largest cut in water use in the 100-year history of the [Colorado River Compact](#), an agreement made in 1922 that divided the river’s water between the upper basin states (Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming), the lower basin states (Arizona, California and Nevada), 30 tribal nations and Mexico.

“It’s huge,” says Schmidt, who believes the cutbacks could represent up to a third of water use in the entire basin. “We have to reduce consumption right now,” says Schmidt. “That’s the only big solution that is available.”

Several unprecedented changes are already in place. Over the next year Lake Powell will hold back 500,000 acre-feet of water usually sent to Lake Mead – further squeezing supply on the lower basin states – and for the first time will receive an extra 500,000 acre-feet from Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Wyoming, one of a handful of much smaller water bodies that can be drawn on.

But Jack Stauss of the [Glen Canyon Institute](#), a non-profit that has been researching the canyon since 1996, says the import of water from other reservoirs is a “simple band-aid fix” that will not solve the underlying problems. “These are completely short term measures,” he says. “Flaming Gorge has a fraction of the capacity of Lake Powell. You’ll quickly drain it.”

The demise of the Glen Canyon Dam, which serves 50 Native American tribes, would impact rural, underserved communities the hardest and alternative energy such as coal or nuclear will likely be more expensive and less green, according to Meiman. Already, the hydropower shortfall means that since January 2021 Wapa has [spent \\$78m of a \\$146m buffer fund](#) it had to buy alternative power for its customers in times of shortages. Now, customers must accept up to a 40% price increase, or accept the uncertainty of receiving a fixed percentage of the dam’s shrinking output. The Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, which sources 40% of its energy from hydropower, estimates its operating costs will rise by \$4.5m this year, which will pass onto its 43,000 residential and commercial customers. “The Navajo community will be disproportionately impacted,” says Srinivasa Venigalla, the authority’s deputy general manager.

Beyond the power it generates, the Glen Canyon Dam also provides crucial services to the grid. Hydropower – unlike solar, wind and gas – can instantaneously ramp up supply, which is particularly important when demand is high, such as during heat waves, when a sudden imbalance between electric supply and demand could lead to a power blackout, a [study](#) by consultancy firm Power Consulting found in 2018.

### Stalled negotiations

Lake Powell's power woes come as the Colorado River basin's climate is rapidly changing. Dubbed the "Lifeline of the Southwest", water flow in the Colorado river could drop 30% by 2050 and 55% by 2100 due to greenhouse gas emissions, according to a 2017 [study](#). Currently, [66% of the western US](#) is experiencing at least severe or extreme drought.

Yet political division over water use and management has slowed progress over how to respond. Many point to the role of the multibillion-dollar agriculture industry, which accounts for [79% of water use](#) in the south-west. Others say municipal consumption must change in what is effectively a desert region, as Las Vegas looks to [crack down on garden turf](#), which requires regular irrigation, and increase the use of recycled water. Meanwhile, some leaders have insisted on the right to continued use.

"Neither the upper or lower states want to make these cuts," says Schmidt. "How many weeks will go by for this high stakes negotiation? Then how strong is their pressure going to be to force the states and tribal leaders into an agreement?"

Tanya Trujillo, assistant secretary for water and science with the Department of the Interior, said that unilateral federal action was a possibility if states fail to come to an agreement in time. "We have a responsibility to make determinations for supply and demand every year and we will make those determinations," Trujillo said. "We are taking the situation very seriously."

Chuck Cullom, executive director of the [Upper Colorado River Commission](#), an interstate agency that administers Colorado River water in the upper basin, said that he remained optimistic that a deal will be struck.

"The water managers understand the consequences of failing to act," he says. "Water delivery to the Glen Canyon is vital to not only the upper basin, Page and Navajo Nation but to the region. The Glen Canyon Dam makes western power grid reliable."

For now, the future of Lake Powell remains in flux. The National Park Service has already been forced to shut down 11 boat ramps at the Lake Powell recreation area, which draws millions of visitors each year, mainly based out of the town of Page, [Arizona](#).

Danny Woods, owner of the Lake Powell Adventure Company, which has run kayak tours along the Colorado River since 2008, said that last year he stopped doing visits to Antelope Canyon – a slot canyon famed for its dramatic red rock – where it is becoming increasingly difficult to land boats.

"The water is extraordinarily low," he says. Like many in Page, Woods is optimistic that the tourism industry can adapt, but acknowledges it will require a painful shift to a new, more frugal future.

"We've been overusing the resources. If you're in the desert, you shouldn't be eating seafood, shipping things all over or flushing poop in clean water. This is a wake up call."

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HEADLINE	07/13 Amid protests Sri Lanka state of emergency
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/13/sri-lanka-protesters-unrest-president-gatabaya-rajapaksa-flees-quit-economy-unrest">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/13/sri-lanka-protesters-unrest-president-gatabaya-rajapaksa-flees-quit-economy-unrest</a>
GIST	<p>Protests erupted in Sri Lanka on Wednesday after president Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled to the Maldives on a military jet – but neither he nor the prime minister officially resigned, throwing the country into political chaos.</p> <p>After Gotabaya's clandestine departure, a Sri Lankan official said that prime minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, had been appointed by Rajapaksa to be acting president. Wickremesinghe declared a</p>

state of emergency as protesters breached the prime minister's offices and took over the state television broadcaster.

Protesters, who have demanded that both Rajapaksa and Wickremesinghe step down, were infuriated by the announcement that Wickremesinghe was now acting president. Thousands congregated outside the prime minister's office, where they were hit with dozens of rounds of teargas by police as they tried to break through the gates. People could be seen running with their eyes streaming and blood coming from the heads.

"The situation is bad, they are firing, firing, firing the teargas non-stop, a lot of people have got injured," said Vinodh Blaze, 37, a tuk-tuk driver whose eyes were bloodshot from the gas.

"Ranil is now acting as president and the people of Sri Lanka don't want him. If he is president, nothing changes. We demand that Gotabaya goes and Ranil goes. We want new politicians we can trust. But we can see that he is not listening to us."

In scenes reminiscent of the weekend, when protesters took over the president's residential palace and offices, on Wednesday the crowds managed to breach the army barriers and stormed into prime minister Wickremesinghe's offices. As the armed forces were overrun, people poured into the corridors and waved flags from the balconies.

Wickremesinghe, who took over as a caretaker prime minister just two months ago, has been accused of propping up the Rajapaksa regime and the demand from protesters is that he resign immediately to make way for a new government.

"It's important that the international community does not just watch and wait until this descends into violence, they need to urge Ranil Wickremesinghe to step down so someone who has the trust of the people can take over," said Shanakiyan Rasamanickam, an MP from the Tamil National Alliance. "He is not the executive, it is illegal for him to be declaring a state of emergency."

Protesters also took over the offices of the Rupavahini state media centre in Colombo. "Until the struggle is over, the Sri Lanka Rupavahini corporation will only telecast programmes of the Jana Aragalaya," said a protester, referring to the people's protest movement, before the channel went off air.

In the early hours of Wednesday morning Rajapaksa, his wife and two security guards had boarded a military aircraft to the Maldives, after he invoked executive powers to enable his escape. "Under the provisions of the constitution and on a request by the government, the Sri Lanka air force provided a plane early today to fly the president, his wife and two security officials to the Maldives," a statement said. They arrived in Malé, the Maldives capital, at 3am.

In a speech on Wednesday afternoon, the speaker of the parliament said the president would submit his resignation by the end of the day.

Protesters, activists and lawyers have called for the president to be prosecuted, along with various Rajapaksa family members, over alleged corruption and human rights abuses. However, while he is still president, Rajapaksa enjoys immunity from arrest. It is believed he will not officially resign until he reaches his final destination of the United Arab Emirates, which has long been a haven for disgraced leaders.

There was much anger among people on the streets that the president had fled, leaving Sri Lanka in an economic mess. "I am so angry have no words," said Sonali Udara, 27. "He has left us a country where we can't afford to eat or look after our families. I want a better future than this."

Rajapaksa's escape followed a dramatic 24 hours in which he had unsuccessfully tried various means of leaving the country. He was blocked from boarding a commercial flight to Dubai on Monday night after



airport staff refused to stamp his passport in the VIP area of the airport. India also refused to give permission for his plane to land on its soil.

The president's younger brother Basil Rajapaksa, who served as finance minister, was also prevented from boarding a flight to Dubai en route to the US, where he is a dual citizen. Basil, too, was reported to have left Sri Lanka on Tuesday night.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was elected in 2019, has been resisting calls for his resignation for months, as Sri Lanka has sunk deeper and deeper into a financial crisis for which he is widely blamed. Rajapaksa and five family members who held senior government posts stand accused of widespread corruption and economic mismanagement which left the country without any foreign currency to import food, fuel and medicines, and pushed inflation to record levels. According to the UN, the island of 22 million people is facing a humanitarian crisis.

Rajapaksa was forced at the weekend to announce his intention to step down from power this week, after the storming of his presidential palace and offices, as well as the official residence of the prime minister. Protesters have refused to leave the buildings until both Rajapaksa and Wickremesinghe have stepped down. Wickremesinghe said on Saturday he would resign once an all-party unity government had been formed.

Opposition parties said the unity government had been agreed in principle, though it was not clear who the new prime minister would be. If Rajapaksa's resignation goes head as planned, parliament will reconvene on 15 July and MPs will vote on 20 July to decide the new president.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/13 China attaches kicked out of Pacific forum</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/13/two-chinese-defence-attaches-removed-from-pacific-islands-forum-meeting">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/13/two-chinese-defence-attaches-removed-from-pacific-islands-forum-meeting</a>
GIST	<p>Two Chinese defence attaches have been kicked out by Fijian police from a <a href="#">Pacific Islands Forum</a> meeting at which the US vice-president, Kamala Harris, was giving a virtual address.</p> <p>The men were sitting in on a session of the forum's fisheries agency at which Harris announced the step-up of US engagement in the region, believed to be in response to China's growing influence.</p> <p>They were sitting with the media contingent, but one was identified as a Chinese embassy official by <a href="#">Lice Movono</a>, a Fijian journalist who is covering the forum for the Guardian.</p> <p>Movono said she "recognised him because I've interacted with him at least three times already", including during the visit of the Chinese foreign minister, Wang Yi, to Suva last month, <a href="#">at which journalists were removed from events and blocked from asking questions</a>.</p> <p>"He was one of the people that was removing us from places and directing other people to remove us," she said. "So I went over to him and asked: 'are you here as a Chinese embassy official or for Xinhua [Chinese news agency], because this is the media space. And he shook his head as if to indicate that he didn't speak English."</p> <p>Movono alerted Fijian protocol officers, who told her to inform Fijian police, who then escorted the two men from the room. They did not answer questions from media.</p> <p>Diplomatic sources later confirmed that the men were a defence attache and a deputy defence attache from China, and part of the embassy in Fiji.</p> <p>The incident comes after an intensification of Chinese involvement in the region in the last few months, which is simmering as an undercurrent to the year's Pacific Islands Forum.</p>

The uptick of tempo of China's involvement has included China's signing of a [controversial and wide-ranging security pact with Solomon Islands](#) and a marathon tour of the Pacific region by the Chinese foreign minister at which more than 50 agreements were believed to have been signed.

China is not a part of the Pacific Islands Forum, but like the US is a partner country. Partner nations are usually invited to attend a post-forum dialogue meeting, at which they can give presentations, but this year the partner dialogue will not be held during the week of the summit, in order to give Pacific countries some breathing room from the intense geopolitical pressure.

It was believed China would use the post-forum dialogue meeting to reintroduce a new version of the [sweeping economic and security deal that it presented to 10 Pacific leaders last month, but which was rejected](#).

However, Harris was invited to attend the forum virtually, in what is seen as a huge coup for the US and a blow to China, which has been not afforded a similar honour.

The US has made a concerted effort to step up its engagement with the Pacific in light of Chinese interest, including by reopening its embassy in Solomon Islands, which was announced in February, plus a suite of measures announced by Harris on Wednesday.

These measures include [two new embassies](#), the appointment of a special presidential envoy to the Pacific Islands Forum and tripling the amount of money requested from the US Congress for economic development and ocean resilience – up to \$60m a year for 10 years – as well as a return of Peace Corps volunteers to Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu.

Fiji's prime minister, Frank Bainimarama, acknowledged the US's reengagement with the region, saying: "It is clear the US is certainly looking a lot more like the Pacific partner we have traditionally held it to be."

In her virtual address to Pacific leaders on Wednesday morning, Harris acknowledged the diplomatic void that the US had left in recent years, saying: "We recognise that in recent years, the [Pacific islands](#) may not have received the diplomatic attention and support that you deserve. So today I am here to tell you directly: we are going to change that."

She also appeared to take a swipe at China's involvement in the Pacific, speaking of "bad actors" in the region.

"At a time when we see bad actors seeking to undermine the rules-based order, we must stand united," Harris said.

"In this region and around the world, the United States believes it is important to strengthen the international rules-based order – to defend it, to promote it and to build on it.

"These international rules and norms have brought peace and stability to the Pacific for more than 75 years – principles that importantly state that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states must be respected; principles that allow all states, big and small, to conduct their affairs free from aggression or coercion."

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HEADLINE	<b>07/13 Shanghai residents fear another lockdown</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/13/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases#shanghai-covid-lockdown">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/13/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases#shanghai-covid-lockdown</a>
GIST	Barely six weeks after Shanghai fully lifted a prolonged and harshly enforced lockdown, China's biggest city is again grappling with a surge of coronavirus cases. Residents wary of being suddenly confined in their homes have been alarmed by mixed messages from official sources circulating on social media, including advice that they stock up on food and medicine.



Since early this month, Shanghai has recorded over 400 infections across the city, many of which have been traced to a cluster at a karaoke bar. The authorities in the city have imposed lockdowns on residential buildings where cases and close contacts have been identified, while a dozen of the city's 16 districts have ordered residents to do two P.C.R. tests within three days this week.

Residents expressed concern that the surge could trigger another lockdown of the city like [the two-month confinement in May and June](#) that shuttered businesses and schools and brought life to a standstill. Public anxiety grew amid reports, including in [the Health Times](#), a Communist Party newspaper, that two residential committees in Shanghai had sent "friendly reminders" to residents to stock up food and medicine for 14 days, just in case apartment buildings were suddenly confined.

The city government moved to assure the public that there was no plan to impose a citywide lockdown. But some residents remained skeptical.

"The government has lost the trust of the public," said Norah Liu, a tech industry worker in Shanghai. "Whatever they will do, I have enough staple food for one month of survival at home anyway."

City officials said at a news conference on Monday that more than 300,000 people have been screened or placed in centralized isolation facilities. [China's stringent approach to eliminating coronavirus infections](#) relies heavily on quarantines and isolation: anyone who tests positive or is deemed a close contact is likely to be confined in a facility or at home.

To cope with the rising number of people deemed to be at risk of spreading the virus, Shanghai has reopened at least one isolation facility for Covid patients that had been used during the spring outbreak, according to [Caixin](#), an influential newsmagazine.

The city's measures are already drawing criticism for being excessive. Some residents complained about being categorized by health workers as "secondary close contacts" simply because they had been in the same mobile messaging chat group as people who tested positive.

The local health agency admitted that in trying to conduct contact tracing around the karaoke bar cluster, workers cast a wide net to try to stop the spread of infections, and apologized for the inconvenience.

Elsewhere in China, the Omicron variant and its BA.5 subvariant, are slipping through the country's many defenses, posing a challenge to the leadership's insistence on eradicating infections. The city of Lanzhou in northwestern China imposed a one-week lockdown on its population of about 4 million starting Wednesday after recording 122 cases in the past week.

At the same time, local officials are under pressure to help revive the economy, which has been [dragged down](#) by Covid controls. In a sign that Beijing is concerned about managing the costs of Covid testing, China's health authority said that local governments were no longer required to test certain imported goods. Officials had previously blamed contaminated packaging of imported products for spreading the virus, although studies show that transmission of the virus from packaging is extremely rare.

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HEADLINE	07/12 Right Covid vaccine this fall? Maybe
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.latimes.com/science/story/2022-07-12/will-americans-have-the-right-covid-19-vaccine-this-fall-omicron">https://www.latimes.com/science/story/2022-07-12/will-americans-have-the-right-covid-19-vaccine-this-fall-omicron</a>
GIST	<p>In a few short months, the weather will turn crisp, the holiday season will draw near, and the coronavirus may embark on its third consecutive winter of death and devastation.</p> <p>That prospect has federal regulators and their scientific advisors engaged in a high-stakes guessing game.</p> <p>The question: How should the COVID-19 vaccine change?</p>

Certainly, the circumstances have changed. The coronavirus strains [responsible for 97% of infections](#) today — BA.4, BA.5 and BA.2.12.1 — didn't exist in 2021, let alone in 2020. Yet all of the vaccines currently available in the U.S. are designed to recognize the version that left China in January 2020.

The shots have done [an admirable job](#). Researchers credit them with [saving 1.9 million U.S. lives](#) in their first year of availability, and they continue to provide solid protection against severe illness and death from COVID-19. The ubiquitous Omicron subvariants, however, have several mutations on their crucial spike proteins that make them less recognizable to an immune system primed to fight the 2½-year-old virus.

The result: A real-world [study](#) found that the protection from three doses of mRNA vaccine is half as strong against Omicron compared to the Delta variant that preceded it. Lab studies also have shown that exposure to Omicron prompts the vaccinated immune system to pump out far fewer antibodies.

On top of that, the immunity induced by vaccines and initial rounds of boosters has waned. The Biden administration has placed [an order for 105 million doses](#) for a fall booster campaign, with an option to buy millions more.

Determining which recipe should go into those doses to induce optimal protection — the vaccine's "composition" — is an exercise in educated guesswork.

Their challenge comes in multiple parts. First, experts need to predict which coronavirus variant — or variants — will dominate the U.S. landscape in late 2022 and into 2023.

Then they need to forecast whether altered versions of the mainstay vaccines will be effective, and whether they pose new challenges regarding safety, cost or timely distribution.

Getting a timely and accurate fix on all this "is truly a challenge, and it is science at its hardest," [Dr. Peter Marks](#), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's vaccine chief, told the agency's independent advisors last month.

If the FDA waits too long to act on the scant available data, Americans may have subpar protection when coronavirus surges again, Marks warned. But speed involves risk. If manufacturers roll out reformulated vaccines [without first testing them in full clinical trials](#), the FDA will need to trust that existing surveillance systems can quickly detect any new safety problems, he said.

"We're being asked, essentially, to have a crystal ball," fumed [Dr. Arnold Monto](#), who chairs the FDA's vaccine advisory committee.

And if health officials make the wrong choice, a pandemic-weary nation could lose confidence in a vaccine that we're likely going to need for years to come.

In many ways, the task of updating COVID vaccines is a turbo-charged version of a dilemma vaccine experts have faced for decades with the influenza vaccine.

Each year, several strains of the wily flu virus circle the globe and infect new populations. In the process, the mix of circulating strains changes, as does their genetic makeup.

So in early fall and early spring, the World Health Organization gathers an international group of vaccine experts to assess which mix of viruses is most likely to circulate in the next six months. Their findings dictate the composition of the shots offered for the flu season ahead.

Sometimes their predictions are accurate, but not always. Between 2001 and 2010, annual flu vaccines protected against circulating influenza B strains [just 50%](#) of the time. In the 2014-15 flu season, a [wrong guess](#) about influenza A viruses led to 758,000 flu hospitalizations among older Americans and 148 flu deaths in children.

The preferred COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. — Pfizer and BioNTech’s Comirnaty and Moderna’s Spikevax — have a key advantage over traditional flu vaccines: Their mRNA technology allows the composition to be altered with comparatively blinding speed. Millions of targeted doses of both vaccines will be available by September or October.

To stretch a booster shot’s protection across the widest possible expanse of variants, it would be ideal to know which of the Omicron subvariants is most genetically distinct from the original coronavirus strain. Pairing the two in a single shot would give the vaccine “breadth,” making it more likely to offer protection against a wide range of strains that continue to circulate.

It’s easy to assume that because they cropped up most recently, BA.4 and BA.5 (which share the same spike protein) have the least in common with the ancestral strain.

But the fledgling field of genetic epidemiology isn’t so sure. [Dr. Kanta Subbarao](#) of the University of Melbourne, who researches the immune system’s response to emerging viral diseases, said the BA.1 subvariant of Omicron is actually the biggest outlier.

If it were up to her to decide which version of the coronavirus to target with a fall booster, “I would choose BA.1,” Subbarao said at the recent meeting of FDA advisors.

The agency didn’t agree. At the end of June, the FDA asked vaccine manufacturers to [produce “bivalent” doses](#) that combine the original vaccine with one designed to recognize BA.4 and BA.5. Who will be advised to get it has yet to be determined.

[Dr. Paul Offit](#), a virologist and immunologist at the University of Pennsylvania, thinks both approaches are wrong. In his view, the original vaccine and boosters are doing a fine job of preventing serious illnesses and death, and the potential upside of targeting Omicron is too uncertain to justify the risks of releasing a shot that hasn’t been subjected to a full clinical trial.

Sure, a bivalent vaccine booster might spur the immune system to generate more antibodies than a regular booster, but that doesn’t necessarily mean recipients would be better off, Offit said in an interview.

“If they’d given me a choice of choice of voting ‘no’ or ‘hell no,’ I’d have voted ‘hell no,’” he said.

To Offit and most other vaccine experts, the ideal response to a shape-shifting virus would be to develop a universal vaccine capable of neutralizing any and all variants that may emerge.

It is an approach that has been the holy grail of flu research, and despite years of work, it remains maddeningly elusive.

To withstand a virus’ evolution, some scientists have tried to design vaccines that target a component that doesn’t change — say, a protein that performs some housekeeping task that’s crucial to its survival. Others have looked to animals such as [llamas and alpacas](#), who produce very tiny antibodies capable of adapting to viruses when they change.

More recently, a team led by scientists at Caltech developed a multipronged vaccine that contains pieces of eight betacoronaviruses, including the one that causes COVID-19. When given to mice and monkeys, it trained their immune systems to recognize a wide range of viruses by showing them, in effect, a miniature family portrait.

The next step is a Phase 1 clinical trial in humans, where many promising universal vaccine candidates have foundered.

“It’s not for want of money. It’s not for want of desire or effort,” Offit said. “It’s just hard to make universal vaccines work.”

HEADLINE	<b>07/13 Wildfires rage in southwestern France</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/wildfires-raging-southwestern-france-with-1500-hectares-burnt-2022-07-13/">https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/wildfires-raging-southwestern-france-with-1500-hectares-burnt-2022-07-13/</a>
GIST	<p>PARIS, July 13 (Reuters) - About 600 firefighters, supported by six water-bomber aircraft, were on Wednesday battling to bring under control two wildfires in southwestern France, which have already burnt more than 1,700 hectares and prompted the evacuation of thousands of tourists.</p> <p>"Important human and material resources are being deployed to master the fires (...) local and national reinforcements are expected," said the local authority for the Gironde department, where the blazes are raging.</p> <p>France, already hit by a series of wildfires over the last few weeks, is suffering - like the rest of Europe - from a second heatwave in as many months.</p> <p>Several wildfires swept across Portugal's central region as well as in western Spain on Tuesday, also forcing the evacuation of hundreds of residents.</p> <p>The biggest of the two Gironde fires is around the town of Landiras, south of Bordeaux, where roads have been closed and 500 residents evacuated, with the blaze having already burnt more than 1,000 hectares.</p> <p>The other one is along the Atlantic Coast, close to the iconic "Dune du Pilat" - the tallest sand dune in Europe - located in the Arcachon Bay area, above which heavy clouds of dark smoke were seen rising in the sky.</p> <p>That fire has already burnt 700 hectares and led to the preventive evacuation of 6,000 people from five surrounding campsites. They were brought for shelter to a local exhibition centre.</p> <p>"Other campers woke us up at around 0430 in the morning. We had to leave immediately and quickly choose what to take with us. I had forgotten my ID, luckily someone took it for me. But I don't have my phone (...) and we don't know what is going to happen," Christelle, one of the evacuated tourists, told BFM TV.</p> <p>On the eve of Bastille Day, the Gironde prefecture has forbidden all fireworks until Monday, July 18 in towns and villages in close proximity to forests.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/13 Ukraine hopes grain export breakthrough</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/wrapup1-kyiv-strikes-russian-held-area-southern-ukraine-rocket-attack-2022-07-13/">https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/wrapup1-kyiv-strikes-russian-held-area-southern-ukraine-rocket-attack-2022-07-13/</a>
GIST	<p>ISTANBUL, July 13 (Reuters) - Ukraine said on Wednesday that a deal to resume grain exports blocked by Russia appeared very close as four-way talks prepared to resume, raising hopes of an end to a standoff that has exposed millions to the risk of starvation.</p> <p>More than 20 million tonnes of Ukrainian grain are stuck in silos at the Black Sea port of Odesa and dozens of ships have been stranded due to Russia's blockade, part of what Moscow calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine but which Kyiv and the West say is an unjustified war of aggression.</p> <p>Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told Spanish newspaper El Pais ahead of the talks in Istanbul between Ukrainian, Russian, Turkish and U.N. officials that Kyiv believed it was now very close to striking a deal for exports to resume.</p>

"We are two steps away from a deal with Russia. We are in the final phase and now everything depends on Russia," it quoted him as saying. Other participants in the negotiations were more cautious, saying much remained to be agreed.

The talks were due to get under way behind closed doors at 1000 GMT.

They were taking place amid a relative lull on the war's front lines, with Russia saying on Wednesday it had shot down four Ukrainian military jets and Donetsk's governor reporting heavy Russian shelling across the eastern region but no civilian fatalities. [read more](#)

Reuters could not independently verify the battlefield accounts.

Ukraine and Russia are major global wheat suppliers. Russia is also a large fertilizer exporter and Ukraine a significant producer of corn and sunflower oil, so clinching a deal to unblock exports is seen as vital for food security, notably among developing nations, and for stabilising markets.

Ukraine and the West have accused Russia of exacerbating a global food crisis by complicating attempts to supply poorer nations with grain and fuelling inflation.

Moscow has blamed Ukraine for the problem, accusing Kyiv of refusing to remove mines that it scattered around its coastline to protect itself from Russia's attack which it says represent a threat to shipping.

Russia has also hit out at the West for imposing sanctions on a range of sectors that make it harder for Russia to fund and insure its own maritime freight services.

#### RUSSIAN SANCTIONS RELIEF?

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Tuesday that participants in the Istanbul talks were "working hard indeed" but there that there was still a way to go to reach a deal.

"Many people are talking about it. We prefer to try and do it," he told reporters.

Diplomats say details of the plan under discussion include an idea for Ukrainian vessels to guide grain ships in and out through mined port waters; Russia agreeing to a truce while shipments move; and Turkey - supported by the United Nations - inspecting ships to allay Russian fears of weapons smuggling.

Russia's Interfax news agency quoted Pyotr Ilyichev, head of the international organisations department at the Russian foreign ministry, as saying that Russia wanted to control and inspect vessels to rule out arms smuggling.

He said Russia was ready to facilitate the navigation of foreign commercial vessels to export Ukrainian grain.

Russian news agency RIA quoted an unnamed diplomatic source as saying Russia's demands included the removal of "obstacles to exports" created by Western sanctions, citing the areas "of shipping insurance, logistics, transportation services and banking operations."

Russia has continued to export grain since the war started on Feb. 24 but there is a lack of large vessels as many owners are afraid to send them to the region. Cost of freight and insurance are also up sharply.

Ukraine sparked hopes on Tuesday for an increase in grain exports despite Russia's blockade following the reopening of the Bystre canal, which provides access to small inland river ports. [read more](#)

	Ukraine expects monthly grain exports to rise by 500,000 tonnes as a result, Deputy Infrastructure Minister Yuriy Vaskov said. Ukraine is also negotiating with Romania and the European Commission about increasing shipments through the Sulina canal, he said.
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Climate protesters disrupt Tour de France</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://nypost.com/2022/07/13/tour-de-france-climate-protesters-cause-cause-havoc-disrupt-race-in-french-alps/">https://nypost.com/2022/07/13/tour-de-france-climate-protesters-cause-cause-havoc-disrupt-race-in-french-alps/</a>
GIST	<p>A small group of environmental protesters created havoc at the Tour de France on Tuesday after they chained themselves together and sat on the roadway.</p> <p>The demonstrators from the Dernière Renovation set off red flares while creating the roadblock during the 10th stage of the prestigious race in the Alps, The Guardian reported.</p> <p>Tour de France officials acted swiftly and were photographed forcibly dragging members of the group from the course into a nearby ditch.</p> <p>The disruption caused officials to delay cyclists until the course was cleared between Morzine and Megève, according to the outlet.</p> <p>The climate change protest came as tour officials pledged to switch gears to reduce the event's pollution and commit "to being an increasingly eco-responsible organization" this year.</p> <p>In 2020, the race was described as "macho and polluting" by Lyon Mayor Gregory Doucet, according to the report.</p> <p>Although cycling is environmentally friendly, the world's largest annual sporting contest is accompanied by a large convoy that rolls a village built to accommodate 4,000 people across rural France for three weeks.</p> <p>"Since the government doesn't care about the climate crisis, we need to come and take over the Tour de France to refocus attention on what matters for our survival. We need to make our government react as they lead us to the slaughterhouse," protesters reportedly said.</p> <p>"Non-violent disruption is our last chance to be heard and avoid the worst consequences of global warming."</p> <p>Magnus Cort of Denmark narrowly won Tuesday's disrupted stage.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Economy pummels small businesses</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.usnews.com/news/economy/articles/2022-07-12/economy-continues-to-pummel-small-businesses-online-inflation-slows">https://www.usnews.com/news/economy/articles/2022-07-12/economy-continues-to-pummel-small-businesses-online-inflation-slows</a>
GIST	<p>Small business optimism dipped again in June, with the National Federation of Independent Business' monthly index hitting a record low.</p> <p>The organization's small business optimism index dropped 3.6 points in June to 89.5, the sixth consecutive month below the 48-year average of 98, the federation reported on Tuesday.</p> <p>"As inflation continues to dominate business decisions, small business owners' expectations for better business conditions have reached a new low," said NFIB Chief Economist Bill Dunkelberg. "On top of the immediate challenges facing small business owners including inflation and worker shortages, the outlook for economic policy is not encouraging either as policy talks have shifted to tax increases and more regulations."</p>



However, there was a bright spot in the survey in that "the net percent of owners raising average selling prices decreased three points to a net 69% seasonally adjusted, following May's record high reading," the report said.

"We suspect many business owners never expected inflation to get this bad or be this persistent," Wells Fargo economists wrote early Tuesday. "While it was easier to pass higher costs along when the economy was humming, many businesses are having a harder time passing on higher costs today, which is eating into operating margins."

Inflation is top of mind for businesses and consumers alike with the Labor Department reporting Wednesday the consumer price index for June. Analysts say the overall number will come in at 8.8% annualized, up from 8.6% in May.

A monthly survey from Morning Consult found that 78% of baby boomers and 67% of Gen Xers reported feeling "very concerned" about inflation in June. That compares to 55% of millennials and less than half of Gen Z adults.

"Baby boomers and Gen Xers also had the highest price sensitivity in June, meaning they were more likely to hold off on a purchase due to its high price," according to the report. "Older adults have lived through high inflation before and are also more likely to be retired or nearing retirement, with the prospect of living off a fixed income making inflation worries more acute."

Officials at the White House are bracing for a bad number, telling reporters on Monday that data is "backward looking," as are most economic reports from the government. The reading is likely to be adversely affected by a run-up in energy costs that has since reversed. Oil fell early Monday to below the \$100 a barrel mark and gasoline prices are down about 35 cents in the past few weeks, though still about \$1.50 above where they were a year ago.

Meanwhile, another report found a glittering of good news on the inflation front. Adobe's digital price index recorded a one-month drop of 1% in June on the price on online goods, although prices did rise 0.3% year over year.

Still, it marked the third month when prices registered a monthly decline.

Electronic goods and apparel led the drop, while prices for online groceries hit record highs, rising 12.44% from June 2021. Eleven of the 18 categories that Adobe tracks saw prices rise in June compared to May.

Later this month, the Federal Reserve's monetary policy committee will meet amid expectations it will raise interest rates by 75 basis points, the same amount it increased rates in June. The Fed is trying to tame inflation without tipping the economy into recession, although the odds of that happening continue to rise.

"If headline and core inflation can show meaningful evidence of moderation through the summer months, we believe there is a decent chance the Federal Reserve could slow the pace of rate hikes by the end of the year," Ameriprise Global Market Strategist Anthony Saglimbene wrote Monday.

"And if that deceleration in rate hikes is fortunate enough to come accompanied by slowing but still solid job growth, then we suspect stock prices could see tailwinds as the year comes to a close," Saglimbene added. "Yet, given it's still July, and admittedly, such a scenario is the best case outcome, investors should remain prepared for inflation and employment developments that look messy."

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HEADLINE	07/12 New strategy to tackle BA.5 subvariant
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/12/biden-covid-ba5-subvariant-strategy">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/12/biden-covid-ba5-subvariant-strategy</a>

GIST	<p><a href="#">Joe Biden</a>'s administration has announced a new strategy to tackle the highly contagious BA.5 coronavirus subvariant amid reports that the government was developing a plan to make second booster shots available to all US adults.</p> <p>In a fact sheet <a href="#">published</a> on Tuesday the White House said BA.5, a subvariant of the Omicron coronavirus variant, is already responsible for the majority of new Covid-19 cases in the US.</p> <p>The subvariant, the government said, "has the potential to cause the numbers of infections to rise in the coming weeks". The US is <a href="#">averaging</a> about 100,000 new coronavirus cases daily, and hospitalizations have been <a href="#">on the rise</a> since April – although they remain below previous peaks.</p> <p>The White House said it would increase efforts to get more people vaccinated, particularly in areas where BA.5 is spreading most rapidly, and it encouraged Americans to test themselves regularly.</p> <p>The announcement came as the Washington Post <a href="#">reported</a> that Biden administration officials are working on a plan to make second booster vaccine shots available to adults under age 50 in a bid to tackle BA.5 and BA.4, another highly contagious Omicron subvariant.</p> <p>For now, adults over 50 and people over 12 who are immunocompromised are eligible for a second booster four months after receiving their first.</p> <p>The new plan, which is yet to be approved by regulators, "has the backing" of the White House Covid-19 coordinator, Ashish Jha, and the government's top infectious-disease expert, Anthony Fauci, according to the Post.</p> <p>The New York Times <a href="#">reported</a> that Fauci in particular has "forcefully argued for broadening eligibility to all younger adults". Many US adults received their first booster shots in November and December, and their protection could be waning, Fauci told the Times.</p> <p>About 67% of all Americans are fully vaccinated, <a href="#">according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</a>. But the CDC said only 34.1% of eligible Americans – those age five and older – have received the first booster. Vaccination rates vary widely by state, with states in the south languishing at <a href="#">about 50%</a> of residents fully vaccinated.</p> <p>BA.4 and BA.5 currently make up 80% of cases in the US, according to the White House, which said BA.5 "may have some increased ability to escape immunity, including from prior infections".</p> <p>"It has the potential to cause the numbers of infections to rise in the coming weeks," the White House said.</p> <p>"Given the rise of BA.5, it is essential that Americans stay up to date on their Covid-19 vaccinations. The science is clear that Covid-19 vaccines remain our single-most important tool to protect people and prevent serious illness, hospitalizations and deaths, and staying up to date on booster shots ensures that people have the highest level of protection possible."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/12 France: charcuterie link to colon cancer
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/12/charcuterie-link-colon-cancer-confirmed-french-authorities">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/12/charcuterie-link-colon-cancer-confirmed-french-authorities</a>
GIST	<p>French health authorities say they have confirmed a link between nitrates added to processed meat and colon cancer, dealing a blow to the country's prized ham and cured sausage industry.</p> <p>The national food safety body Anses said its study of data published on the subject supported similar conclusions in 2015 from the World <a href="#">Health</a> Organization (WHO).</p> <p>Anses "recommends reducing consumption of the range of nitrates and nitrites by deliberately limiting exposure through food consumption", it said in a statement.</p>

Nitrates are added to a range of food products to improve their shelf life and flavour, and to help give pork-based products their pink hue.

France is one of the world's biggest producers of cold cuts, known as charcuterie, which are often consumed as snacks or with early evening drinks.

The government immediately announced it would launch an action plan to reduce the use of the additives later this year.

"It is about limiting their use to the strictly necessary," said a joint statement from the health and agricultural ministers. "The reduction must be done in a balanced way that guarantees food security for the consumer."

[The 2015 WHO warning](#) caused headlines around the world after the UN body's International Agency for Research on Cancer concluded that processed meats should be classified as group 1 carcinogens.

The warning applied to all processed meats, from the bacon eaten in large quantities in the US and Britain, to Italian salami, Spanish chorizo, German bratwurst and French charcuterie.

Anses said in its statement that reducing nitrates would result in increased risks of serious illnesses such as botulism, listeria or salmonella. But these dangers could be managed by shorter best-before consumption dates and modified manufacturing processes, it added.

"Faced with the scientific facts, the political class must take action," the campaign group Foodwatch, the League Against [Cancer](#) and the health-monitoring app Yuka said in a joint statement.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Virologists concern omicron subvariant</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/12/centaurus-virologists-express-concern-at-new-covid-subvariant-omicron">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/12/centaurus-virologists-express-concern-at-new-covid-subvariant-omicron</a>
GIST	<p>Virologists have voiced concerns about the emergence of another fast-spreading <a href="#">Omicron variant</a>, which is rapidly gaining ground in India and has already arrived in the UK.</p> <p>The warning came as MPs called for redoubled efforts to persuade the nearly 3 million adults in England who have not yet received a single dose of Covid vaccine, to take up the offer of vaccination.</p> <p>The BA.2.75 variant – nicknamed “Centaurus” – was first detected in India in early May. Cases in the UK have since risen steeply – and apparently faster than those of the <a href="#">extremely transmissible BA.5 variant</a>, which is also present in India, and is rapidly displacing the previously dominant BA.2 variant in many countries.</p> <p>BA.2.75 has also since been detected in about 10 other countries, including the UK, US, <a href="#">Australia</a>, Germany and Canada.</p> <p>The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) designated it a “variant under monitoring” on 7 July, meaning there is some indication that it could be more transmissible or associated with more severe disease, but the evidence is weak or has not yet been assessed.</p> <p>The <a href="#">World Health Organization</a> (WHO) is also closely monitoring the new variant, although its chief scientist, Dr Soumya Swaminathan, said there were not yet enough samples to assess its severity.</p> <p>In addition to its apparent rapid growth and wide geographical spread, virologists have been alerted by the sheer number of extra mutations BA.2.75 contains, relative to BA.2, from which it is likely to have evolved. “This could mean that it has had the chance to evolve an advantage over an already successful virus lineage, said Dr Stephen Griffin, a virologist at the University of Leeds.</p>

“It’s not so much the exact mutations, more the number/combination,” said Dr Tom Peacock, a virologist at Imperial College London, who was the first to identify Omicron as a potential concern back in November 2021. “It’s hard to predict the effect of that many mutations appearing together – it gives the virus a bit of a ‘wildcard’ property where the sum of the parts could be worse than the parts individually. “It is definitely a potential candidate for what comes after BA.5. Failing that, it’s probably the sort of thing we’ll have come along next, ie a ‘variant of a variant’.”

Even if it does not take off in other countries, its growth in India suggests it is likely to be an issue there, at the very least, Peacock added. “It’s clearly growing pretty well in India, but India hasn’t got much BA.5, and it is still very unclear how well it fares against [that].”

Griffin cited it as yet another example of the virus’s impressive capacity to tolerate changes in its spike protein – the part it uses to infect cells, and which most Covid vaccines are based on.

“This time last year, many were convinced that Delta represented an evolutionary pinnacle for the virus, but the emergence of Omicron and the vast increase in variability and antibody evasiveness is a sign that we cannot as a population follow an influenza-like plan to keep pace with viral evolution,” said Griffin.

In addition to vaccines, longer-term plans should include variant-agnostic measures to prevent infections and reinfections. “This includes creating infection-resilient environments through improved ventilation, filtration, or sterilisation of indoor air, sensible reprovision of lateral flow tests, and appropriate and supported isolation periods that will actually reduce ongoing transmission,” he said.

Meanwhile, the government’s public accounts committee has called on health officials to [do more to reach people who are still unvaccinated](#), and therefore at greater risk of becoming hospitalised or dying as a result of Covid-19.

In a report on the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine programme, it said NHS England and the UK Health Security Agency should urgently evaluate which approaches were most effective for increasing uptake, and support local areas to deploy them.

At the end of May 2022, 2.98 million adults in England remained unvaccinated, with a further 1.5 million having only one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine. Many unvaccinated people are young city-dwellers, but there has also been particularly low uptake among pregnant women, the report said.

“Despite work to date, low vaccination rates persist in many vulnerable groups and fresh approaches are needed to reach them,” said Dame Meg Hillier, who chairs the public accounts committee.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/13 Day 140 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/13/russia-ukraine-war-update-what-we-know-on-day-140-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/13/russia-ukraine-war-update-what-we-know-on-day-140-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The death toll from a weekend Russian missile attack on a residential apartment block in Chasiv Yar, eastern Ukraine, rose to at least 45 on Tuesday.</b> <a href="#">Saturday’s strike</a> destroyed the five-storey building and damaged several others in the Donetsk region city. Nine people had been pulled out alive as the rescue operation continued.</li> <li>• <b>At least seven people were reportedly killed by a <a href="#">Ukrainian missile strike on a large ammunition store</a> in the town of Nova Kakhovka, in Russia-occupied Kherson, in a strike attributed to recently acquired US weapons.</b> The explosion hit a warehouse close to a key railway line and a dam on the Dnieper river. Footage on social media showed a large explosion lighting up the night, burning ammunition and billowing smoke.</li> <li>• <b>Russia has reportedly heavily shelled the eastern town of Bakhmut in the Donetsk region overnight</b> in response to the Nova Kakhovka strike. Kyiv Independent reporter Illia Ponomarenko</li> </ul>

tweeted alongside footage purportedly of the assault: “Meanwhile, [Russia](#) responds by sweeping Bakhmut off the earth with artillery in the night.”

- **At least five people have been injured and one killed by Russian shelling in the region of Kharkiv, according to the daily update from regional governor Oleh Synyehubov.** He has posted to Telegram this morning to say “The terror of the civilian population of Kharkiv Region by the Russian occupiers continues.”
- **Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, says Russia “doesn’t have the courage” to admit defeat.** In a nationally televised address, Zelenskiy also mocked the Russian military’s apparent reliance on ageing weapons and Soviet-era tactics, and insisted the unity of his country’s citizenry, combined with the strength of Ukraine’s armed forces, meant the outcome of the war was “certain”.
- **Russian forces will likely focus on taking several small Donbas towns during the coming week, including Siversk and Dolyna** on the approaches to Slovyansk and Kramatorsk, according to the UK Ministry of Defence. “The urban areas of Slovyansk and Kramatorsk likely remain the principal objectives for this phase of the operation,” the British intelligence report said.
- **Grain shipments via the Danube river have increased with the reopening of the Bystre canal.** The number of foreign ships reaching Ukraine ports to help with grain exports has doubled to 16 within the last 24 hours, according to Ukraine’s deputy infrastructure minister Yuriy Vaskov. Ukraine has restored long-decommissioned ports to facilitate the exportation of grain due to Russia’s Black Sea blockade, and expects to increase monthly exports to 500,000 tonnes.
- **The US treasury announced on Tuesday it was sending an additional \$1.7bn (£1.4bn) in economic aid to [Ukraine](#) to fund “essential services”.** European foreign ministers late on Monday approved €1bn (£850m) in aid, the first instalment of a €9bn rescue package agreed in May.
- **The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, is set to [visit Tehran next week](#)** to hold talks with the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The meeting comes as the US has accused Iran of preparing to supply Russia with hundreds of weapons-capable drones for use in Ukraine.
- **Military delegations from Ukraine, Russia and Turkey will meet UN officials in Istanbul on Wednesday to discuss a possible deal to resume safe exports of Ukraine grain** from the major Black Sea port of Odesa as a global food crisis worsens.
- **The UN human rights office (OHCHR) said on Tuesday that more than 5,000 civilians have been killed in Ukraine** since Russia invaded on 24 February, adding that the real toll was probably much higher.
- The European Union has so far **frozen €13.8bn (£11.7bn) worth of assets held by Russian oligarchs, other individuals and entities** sanctioned for Moscow’s war against Ukraine, the EU’s top justice official said on Tuesday.
- Russia has claimed to have **killed a significant number of foreign mercenaries fighting in Ukraine** in the last three weeks, including 23 from Britain.
- **Russia has launched a criminal case against one of the last opposition figures remaining in the country,** for allegedly spreading false information about the Russian army, his lawyer said on Tuesday. Ilya Yashin, 39, a Moscow city councillor, was sentenced to 15 days in jail last month for disobeying police. He had been set to be released in the early hours of Wednesday.
- **The appeals over the death sentences of captured Aiden Aslin, Shaun Pinner and Saudun Brahim will be dealt with within a month,** an official from the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic said. The UK foreign secretary, Liz Truss, has said she “utterly condemns” the sentencing, stating: “They are prisoners of war. This is a sham judgment with absolutely no legitimacy.”
- **Brazil is looking to buy as much diesel as it can from Russia** and the deals closed “as recently as yesterday”, the Brazilian foreign minister Carlos Franca said on Tuesday, without giving further details.

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HEADLINE	07/13 Donetsk town reels from Russian strike
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/13/donetsk-town-of-chasiv-yar-reels-from-deadly-russian-rocket-strike">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/13/donetsk-town-of-chasiv-yar-reels-from-deadly-russian-rocket-strike</a>



In the small town of Chasiv Yar, not far from Ukraine's eastern frontlines, rescue workers were still searching through the wreckage left by [Saturday's multiple rocket strike](#). At least 43 people died, one of the biggest losses of life in Ukrainian-controlled Donbas since a single Russian rocket killed at least 52 people at the [train station](#) in the nearby town of Kramatorsk in April.

The rescuers had managed to pull nine people out of the rubble but by Tuesday, they told the Guardian, they expected to recover only corpses.

As Russian forces advance from newly conquered Luhansk, the frontlines appear to be encroaching on what is left of the civilian population in Ukrainian-controlled Donetsk. The two provinces make up Ukraine's industrial Donbas region.

Ukrainian officials are urging locals to leave what may soon be a battle zone, but many of those left in Chasiv Yar say they do not have the means to start anew and would rather stay in their homes than live in a hostel elsewhere in Ukraine. It is a situation replicated for millions of Ukrainians living along the frontlines or in the Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine.

Russian forces have bulldozed their way through the Donbas town by town using superior numbers of artillery pieces and large ammunition stocks, which Ukraine is only [now targeting](#) using newly supplied long-range western rocket systems. Moscow announced a pause in operations last week after declaring victory in Lysychansk, the last Ukrainian stronghold in Luhansk, but [Ukrainian officials](#) say there has been no let-up in attacks.

On Saturday three precision rockets hit two apartment buildings in Chasiv Yar where civilians lived. Some soldiers from a nearby barracks had moved in, according to locals, but it is not clear how many, or how many of them died. Neither of the buildings appeared to have been of high strategic importance.

The town's residents are still reeling from the strikes and rallying to clean up the debris. Windows on apartment blocks near the strikes were blown out and there is no running water.

Several people said they had nowhere else to go and did not feel welcomed by the rest of Ukraine, who they said assumed that they were pro-Russia.

"It's not our fault that we were born here," said Yevhen, in his late 30s, who until April worked at a factory in Kyiv and had returned to be with his family. "Contrary to what people like to think, we didn't spend our lives waiting for this. I lived [in Kyiv] for four years and for four years people would say 'oh, you're from Donbas, you're a separatist'. But they don't even understand what that means. I'm not running around with guns."

Yevhen described being in the entrance of his block of flats and throwing himself to the ground after the first strike, together with some of his neighbours. Moments later, lying face down, he felt a second strike hit even closer. It had hit the end of his block of flats, about 12 metres away. He said he got up and ran into the building to find his wife and 13-year-old son crouching, unharmed, in the doorway of their apartment.

He and other neighbours tried to locate and evacuate those still inside in the block. "It sounded like a plane. I don't wish hearing that sound on anyone," he said of the strikes. "I don't understand why we are torturing each other, someone should just press the big red nuclear button and stop people from suffering."

Natasha, one of Yevhen's neighbours, said she felt that no one cared about them because "bad things happening in the Donbas is a foregone occurrence" for many outside the region.

"People keep saying leave, but where to? With what money?" Natasha said. "We used to get 4,000 hryvnia (now worth about £110) a month, then they raised it to 7,000. We don't get any benefits for the children. We're basically homeless people but with apartments."



Yevhen added: “Everybody who left on 24 February [when Russia launched its invasion] spent all their money and then came back. There were no opportunities for them.”

The situation for internally displaced people is harder than in 2014 when Russian-backed separatists seized parts of the Donbas, because Ukraine’s economy then was still functioning normally in most places.

In an apartment on the far end of the block, next door to the section that took a direct hit, 64-year-old Valery Nepochatykh was lying on a sofa, holding a bandage on his forehead where doctors had stitched up a wound. His legs had cuts from windows shattering into the flat he shares with his wife, Nadia.

Just as he started to tell his story, shelling that had up to then been rumbling in the distance sounded in the town. Yevhen urged everyone outside in the street to run into a basement.

There in the basement, the neighbours sat around a table with a candle and a few KitKats, waiting to see if there would be more shelling. One elderly couple, Ludmilla and Pavlo, showed where they had been sleeping on the floor since the strike.

“Here we all know each other. We all know the people who were killed,” said Pavlo, who said he would now celebrate the day of the strike as a second birthday because he had survived.

Ludmilla, 67, wearing a flowery summer dress, gave the room advice on what to do when they hear the whistle of a shell. “Never run, just get down on the floor and try to hide your organs from the shrapnel,” she said.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Hopes of Covid reprieve fade</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/hopes-of-covid-19-reprieve-fade-as-ba-5-subvariant-takes-over-11657618201?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/hopes-of-covid-19-reprieve-fade-as-ba-5-subvariant-takes-over-11657618201?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>Covid-19 is circulating widely as the <a href="#">BA.5 Omicron subvariant</a> elevates the risk of reinfections and rising case counts, spoiling chances for a summer reprieve from the pandemic across much of the U.S. Covid-19 levels are high in a fifth of U.S. counties, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s metric based on case and hospital data, a share that has been mostly rising since mid-April.</p> <p>BA.5 <a href="#">is estimated to represent nearly two in three recent U.S. cases</a> that are averaging just more than 100,000 a day, CDC data show. The true number of infections <a href="#">may be roughly six times as high</a>, some virus experts said, in part because so many people are using at-home tests that state health departments largely don’t track.</p> <p>“We think we’re in a very high level of community transmission, second only to the Omicron peak from the wintertime,” said Jeffrey Duchin, health officer for the public-health agency covering Seattle and King County, Wash.</p> <p>Biden administration health officials said Tuesday that BA.5 has the potential to push the number of infections higher in the coming weeks. They urged eligible people to get vaccine booster shots to lower the risk of hospitalization and death, and not to wait for potential updated boosters targeting Omicron subvariants.</p> <p>Getting a booster now “does not preclude your also doing it in the fall,” said Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, during a White House briefing. “If the risk is now, address the current risk.”</p> <p>Among people ages 50 and older, only 28% who received their first booster dose have gotten a second, according to the CDC. And only 34% of people 65 and older have gotten a second booster shot.</p>

Federal health officials currently [recommend second boosters](#) of the Pfizer Inc.-[BioNTech SE](#) or Moderna Inc. vaccines for adults age 50 and older if it has been at least four months since the first booster. Officials have discussed offering boosters to all adults, Ashish Jha, the White House's Covid-19 response coordinator said Tuesday, adding that a decision to do so would rest with federal regulators. Nationally, [wastewater data](#) tracking the prevalence of the Covid-19 virus through July 6 has recently trended up, according to Biobot Analytics. Such data can provide clues about the pandemic's trajectory.

New York City last week urged people to resume masking in public, indoor settings and around crowds outside. Los Angeles County's public health department said rising Covid-19 hospital admissions mean that the county also could soon reach high community prevalence and that officials would reinstate a mask mandate if the county stayed at that level for two weeks.

Signs of acute illness [remain muted](#), continuing a hallmark of the spring surge, as treatments plus immunity from vaccines and previous infections reduce risks for many people. But the high prevalence of infection in many areas continues to cause disruptions, [including spoiled travel plans](#), sick children sidelined from camp and child care and hospital employees who can't report to work. Covid-19 cases have [exacerbated staffing challenges dogging airlines](#) and in some cases caused canceled flights.

BA.5's mutations make it particularly adept at causing repeat infections, even in people who had the version of Omicron that [caused the largest recorded spike in cases last winter](#). There is no evidence to suggest BA.5 causes more severe disease, CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said.

Dr. Jha noted some mixed signals from overseas. Portugal, where vaccine and booster coverage is robust, experienced a sizable wave of serious illness and death after BA.5 hit there recently, Dr. Jha said over the weekend. South Africa, on the other hand, [recorded a low rate of deaths](#) after BA.5 surged there this spring, he said.

In addition to vaccines, health officials urged people to [use treatment medications](#) such as [Pfizer Inc.](#)'s Paxlovid. They encouraged people to test before gatherings and use high-quality masks in crowded, indoor spaces.

The pace of hospital admissions for Covid-19-positive patients has recently sped up, federal data indicate. The seven-day moving average for confirmed Covid-19 patients in hospitals has topped 34,000, federal data show, up from a low near 10,000 in April but far below January's record peak topping 150,000.

Many of the hospitalizations are cases where patients test positive after being admitted for other reasons. Deaths are hovering around 300 to 350 a day, Dr. Jha said Tuesday. This is much closer to historic lows than highs, though he called the current level unacceptable.

The reduced threat is one reason a pandemic-fatigued populace is less likely to change behavior when cases are high, said Robert Wachter, chairman of the department of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. Crowds [are once again common](#), from concerts to restaurants to airport terminals. Mask use is scattered, while mandates remain rare.

"Part of what motivated people to be super careful for a long time was the fear that I'm going to die of this thing," Dr. Wachter said. "I think people have less fear of that, and that's not inappropriate."

He and other health experts said they [continue to take precautions in their own lives](#) because of the risk of developing long Covid symptoms after an infection. Biden administration officials said they plan to boost public awareness around [ventilation and filtration improvements](#) to reduce disease spread.

Many health experts believe shoring up indoor air quality is key to limiting spread of the virus as more people return to indoor space such as offices and schools. [Most Covid-19 transmission happens indoors](#), research has shown, a hospitable environment for the virus-carrying particles known as aerosols created when infected people laugh, speak and breathe.

“We know that improving indoor air quality by improving ventilation and putting in indoor air purifiers, they can make an enormous difference,” Dr. Jha said.

Persistently high levels of infections in communities can also leave elderly people and those with compromised immune systems more exposed, according to epidemiologists. Tamping down on the spread of the virus also gives it less chance to mutate, Dr. Fauci said.

As a surge that started in early spring grinds along through the summer, some health officials are thinking about the fall. U.S. health authorities are planning a fall booster campaign to protect against a potential winter surge, and vaccine makers [are racing to update their vaccines](#) to target Omicron subvariants, including BA.5.

Public-health officials and experts hope modified shots [will help get some booster-hesitant people off the fence](#). “With a good public-health campaign behind the rollout of the vaccine, we can shift the scales of that trajectory of people getting both their boosters and vaccinated,” said Debra Furr-Holden, dean of New York University School of Global Public Health.

Dr. Jha said there isn’t enough funding for the federal government to procure updated vaccines for everyone in the U.S. The administration has repurposed about \$10 billion in Covid-19 funding in part to purchase [some potentially updated vaccines for the fall](#). Those updated vaccines could be available as early as October, officials said.

Dr. Duchin, in Seattle, said he hoped communities would head toward the fall at a low level of Covid-19 transmission to ease pressure on health systems. He said he was worried about the consequences if instead Covid-19 is circulating widely at what is traditionally a more intense time for respiratory illnesses generally.

“This virus is relentless in the way it’s challenging us in unexpected ways,” he said.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Russia holds 400 passenger jets hostage</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/07/12/russia-aircraft-seizure-sri-lanka/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/07/12/russia-aircraft-seizure-sri-lanka/</a>
GIST	<p>Early last month, an employee of Sri Lanka’s court system walked into the nation’s biggest airport brandishing a judicial order grounding an Aeroflot flight that was about to take off for Moscow.</p> <p>The aircraft’s nearly 200 passengers were deplaned and taken to local hotels, their travel foiled by an Irish company that had leased the jet to Aeroflot and was now demanding its return to comply with Western sanctions on Russia.</p> <p>The incident kicked off a diplomatic row on the tropical island south of India, which is heavily dependent on Russia for tourist income and, of late, for fuel. First, Aeroflot halted all flights to the island, blocking the flow of leisure travelers. Then, in private talks, according to a European official familiar with what took place, Moscow threatened to cut off energy deliveries as well — something that would have worsened an economic crisis that was already causing food and fuel shortages and widespread unrest.</p> <p>Within days, the court, acting after a request from the government, issued a new ruling clearing the jet to fly, and it left for Russia, where it now <a href="#">flies regularly</a> between Moscow and Kyrgyzstan.</p> <p>For Sri Lanka, the battle over the Irish-owned airliner was just a blip in a long string of developments that last week led to chaos as protesters <a href="#">stormed</a> the homes of the president and prime minister, forcing them <a href="#">to promise</a> to resign and the president <a href="#">to flee</a> the country. But for Russia, it was a victory in a hard fought campaign against a four-month Western sanctions campaign, demonstrating the lengths Moscow is willing to go to defend its economy, particularly in vulnerable nations where it has leverage.</p>

There are signs that the sanctions are starting to bite. Russian government statistics show that auto production [plummeted](#) by 96.7 percent in May compared with a year ago, threatening a sector that employs 600,000. Economists say that reflects a broad collapse in manufacturing as foreign-owned factories close and domestic ones [struggle to import](#) Western components.

Hundreds of foreign companies have [ceased operations](#) in Russia, inflation is running at 16 percent and the country's gross domestic product will contract by 8.5 percent this year, the International Monetary Fund [predicts](#). Economists say Russia's long-term prospects remain dire. "The potential for the decline is far from exhausted," Sergey Aleksashenko, a former top official in Russia's Finance Ministry and central bank, who now lives in the United States, wrote June 30 in a newsletter.

But some factors continue working in Russia's favor, including lucrative [oil and gas](#) exports that fund the military and social safety net. Russia earned about 93 billion euros — roughly \$93 billion, or \$1 billion a day — in revenue from fossil fuel exports in the first 100 days of the war, [according to](#) the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, a nonprofit in Finland.

And Moscow is fighting hard where it can to blunt the sanctions' impact. Aviation is one of those sectors.

To date, Russian airlines are refusing to return more than 400 planes and a slew of aircraft parts that they leased from Western companies, forcing the leasing companies to file \$10 billion in insurance claims, according to data and research provider Cirium.

"Sanctions may be serving the long-term purpose of isolating Russia," said Risto Maeots, chief executive of an aviation-servicing company in Estonia that has been unable to recover several engines from Russia. "But in the short term, they weren't as painful as they were meant to be."

For all the attention given to the seizure of yachts belonging to Russia's oligarchs, what happens with the aircraft is of far greater import, he added.

"What will the West do with the yachts — go fishing? Russians can do much more with the jets," he said. "So short term, they got a fairly good deal."

Asked to comment, Russia's embassy in Washington, D.C., did not address questions about the Sri Lanka case but referred to remarks June 8 from the Foreign Ministry calling the sanctions illegal.

"International civil aviation has turned into a tool of political and economic pressure. This is nothing but a blatant abuse of international air law," spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said then, adding that the sanctions would "adversely affect flight safety."

Sri Lanka's Ministry of Foreign Affairs called the incident a commercial dispute and said the government did everything to not escalate it into a diplomatic one.

Aviation sanctions were designed to target one of Russia's key vulnerabilities — it relies on Boeing and Airbus jets manufactured overseas and owned by Western leasing companies. Of the 968 planes in Russia's commercial fleet on the eve of the Ukraine war, 515 belonged to non-Russian leasing companies, according to Rob Morris, global head of consultancy at Cirium.

Even aircraft manufactured inside Russia, such as the Sukhoi Superjet, a regional aircraft, and the Irkut MC-21, intended to compete with the Airbus A320 and Boeing 737, use engines, avionics and software from the United States and Europe. A Russian state-owned company is attempting to develop a fully domestic engine for the MC-21, but it's going to take time, analysts say.

Sanctions required Western companies to terminate their leases and recall their planes. And an unprecedented set of export controls imposed by a coalition of 37 countries in Europe, North America and Asia also banned companies from selling new planes, parts or software to Russia, from servicing Russian-

operated aircraft or providing them online software updates. Even refueling a Boeing jet leased by a Russian entity was off-limits.

But in March, Russian President Vladimir Putin delayed some of the pain by [signing a law](#) allowing airlines to keep foreign aircraft for use on domestic flights. So far, Western companies have recovered only about 80 of the 515 planes they leased to Russia, according to Cirium.

“The lessor community as a whole has accepted the fact that most aircraft they have placed within Russia will not be repossessed,” said Mike Stengel, a consultant with Michigan-based AeroDynamic Advisory.

AerCap’s tortured pursuit of the jet that escaped seizure in Sri Lanka shows how poorly the recovery efforts have gone. The Irish company, the world’s largest lessor of commercial aircraft, [says](#) it alone has more than 100 planes stuck inside Russia, for which it has submitted \$3.5 billion in insurance claims.

According to court documents in Sri Lanka, AerCap wrote Aeroflot demanding the return of the Airbus A330-300 two days after Russia invaded Ukraine in February. It followed up with five more letters by mid-April, but Aeroflot kept using the plane, worth an estimated \$17.3 million, to shuttle tourists to and from Sri Lanka — providing the nearly bankrupt nation a rare source of income.

When AerCap won the court order that grounded the plane on June 2, Aeroflot protested, canceling all of its flights to the country and claiming that Sri Lanka had given Russia a “state guarantee” that its aircraft could fly in and out unmolested. Moscow’s Foreign Ministry warned Sri Lanka’s ambassador of “negative impact” on bilateral relations.

Among Moscow’s threats, according to the European official, was to cut off energy deliveries. Those had proved crucial on at least one occasion in late May, when a shipment of Russian oil allowed Sri Lanka’s sole refinery to restart for the first time in over two months, [Bloomberg News reported](#).

In an interview with a [local paper](#) published June 5, Sri Lanka’s justice minister said he instructed the attorney general to “sort it out because there are consequences beyond the law. Our country can be affected prejudicially due to such orders.”

The next day, Sri Lankan government lawyers representing the state-owned airport joined Aeroflot in asking the court to overturn the grounding order. The court obliged, saying the order had been improperly served, and the plane promptly took off for Moscow.

Last week, a month after the plane left Sri Lanka, the nation’s president, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, tweeted about a phone call with Putin.

“While thanking him for all the support extended by his gvt to overcome the challenges of the past, I requested an offer of credit support to import fuel to [#lka](#) in defeating the current econ challenges,” he [tweeted](#), using an abbreviation for Sri Lanka.

AerCap isn’t the only leasing company affected. Maeots, the chief executive of Estonian company Magnetic MRO, said that before the invasion, he had four Boeing engines leased to a Russian airline. With the imposition of European export controls, he had one month to get them back. The Russian airline simply refused to return them. “My assets are still there,” he said.

Even if the companies eventually regain the planes, that’s not the end of their worries, said Jason Dickstein, the general counsel of the Aviation Suppliers Association, a U.S.-based group representing aircraft parts distributors. Because Russia has given its domestic companies permission to try to produce spare parts for the planes, it’s likely the planes will contain parts that haven’t been submitted to rigorous inspection by Western agencies.

“There is a fear among leasing companies that if and when they ever recover [their planes] they won’t be able to use them because they won’t be able to verify their air worthiness,” he said.

HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Microsoft cuts jobs, realigns, plans hiring</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/microsoft/microsoft-cuts-jobs-in-structural-adjustment-plans-more-hiring/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/microsoft/microsoft-cuts-jobs-in-structural-adjustment-plans-more-hiring/</a>
GIST	<p>Microsoft cut some jobs on Monday as it realigned business groups and roles after the close of its fiscal year on June 30. It said it plans to keep hiring for other roles and finish the current fiscal year with increased headcount.</p> <p>The layoffs, affecting less than 1% of the 180,000-person workforce, spanned a variety of groups including consulting and customer and partner solutions and were dispersed across geographies, the Redmond-based company said.</p> <p>“Today we had a small number of role eliminations. Like all companies, we evaluate our business priorities on a regular basis, and make structural adjustments accordingly,” Microsoft said in an emailed statement. “We will continue to invest in our business and grow headcount overall in the year ahead.”</p> <p>In recent years, Microsoft has typically announced job cuts shortly after the July 4 holiday in the U.S. as it makes changes for the new fiscal period. The company said the layoffs were not spurred by the worsening economic picture, but in May it also slowed hiring in the Windows and Office groups.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Dramatic hike gas price from new law</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/analysis-finds-washington-drivers-could-continue-to-see-rise-in-gas-prices-after-new-law-in-2023">https://www.q13fox.com/news/analysis-finds-washington-drivers-could-continue-to-see-rise-in-gas-prices-after-new-law-in-2023</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> - A potentially dramatic hike in the cost of gasoline has Gov. Jay Inslee at odds with an analysis released Tuesday by the conservative-leaning <a href="#">Washington Policy Center</a> (WPC).</p> <p><a href="#">According to the WPC</a>, drivers could see a hike of \$0.46 a gallon and \$0.56 a gallon for diesel next year.</p> <p>Starting Jan.1, many companies that emit carbon dioxide gas will be charged a carbon offset fee based on the amount of CO2 emissions they create. The more emissions, the higher the fee.</p> <p>When \$6 a gallon for gas is no longer abnormal, the political gambit there is how much of the carbon emission tax will be passed onto the consumer.</p> <p>The Climate Commitment Act passed by the Democratically-led legislature and signed by the Governor in 2021 goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2023.</p> <p>Under the <a href="#">Climate Commitment Act passed earlier this year</a>, the Department of Ecology must set up a cap-and-invest program by 2023. That program will set a statewide cap on greenhouse gas emissions, and then gradually reduce the cap to match the emission limits set in state law, Ecology said.</p> <p>The law requires businesses and organizations that produce more than 25,000 tons of greenhouse gases a year to obtain emissions allowances for their total emissions. The law is supposed to take the money from those companies paying to emit CO2 gas and put it into the state's general fund spending.</p> <p>Drivers will also be paying the country's second-highest gas tax of \$0.49 a gallon when the law goes into effect.</p> <p>"We in Washington now have one of the best caps and invest bills, which will actually give us cleaner air and invest dollars in building jobs in the state of Washington," Inslee told FOX 13 News.</p>



The law is similar to 'cap and trade' that's been in effect in California since 2013. Washington calls it "cap and invest."

"The political rhetoric is to call it 'cap and invest' because they take the taxes, and then they spend it," says Todd Myers, the Environmental Director for the Washington Policy Center.

Washington voters have twice rejected similar cap and invest initiatives. Critics claimed it would have led to higher gasoline prices with the cost of 'cap and invest' passed to the consumers by the companies who have to pay it.

Inslee told FOX 13 that the cost to consumers will be minimal.

"This is going to have a minimal impact if any. Pennies. We are talking about pennies," the Governor said. "Potentially, not all of this would be passed off to the consumer and what they would (pass on), would be pennies."

But Myers used the same Department of Ecology report that the Governor cites for his pennies remarks, for his analysis.

"If you look at his own department's study and the intent of his law, it is to drive gas prices up, so gas use goes down, and we would produce less CO<sub>2</sub>," says Myers.

Myers concluded the cost of carbon offsets at a rate of \$20.60 per metric ton of carbon emissions would equate to \$0.46 for every gallon of gas produced.

He says the added cost to a gallon of gas will increase as the cost of carbon emissions goes up. In 2030, he predicts it will be \$0.80 a gallon for gas, and \$0.97 for a gallon of diesel.

Unfortunately, the report doesn't provide an apples-to-apples comparison. Instead, it uses potential percentage increases in the cost of fuel.

It says 'cap and invest' could increase fuel prices between 1.22% to 1.50% in 2030; 0.33% to 0.50% in 2040; and 0.14% to 0.30% by 2050.

It's numbers that tend to justify the Governor's pennies remarks, but Myer says the Department of Ecology report assumes high gas prices and other variables involved.

When FOX 13 asked the Governor if he plans to tell the people of Washington, that they could expect higher gas prices as a result of the emission tax, Inslee said, "that's not true, they are not going to see much higher gas prices-- maybe even lower than they are today."

"Look, the people causing the extraordinary gas prices are the gas and oil companies, they control the price, not me" Inslee said.

"When the Governor says it's not a tax and we are not increasing gas prices, that's simply not accurate," says Myers.

Myers points to the California CO<sub>2</sub> emission cap and trade costs to consumers. Published reports estimate California's emission 'cap and trade' is adding an additional \$0.19 to a gallon of gas.

It's an estimate because oil and gas companies are not required to report how much of 'cap and trade' is added into the price of gas.

California consistently has the highest gas prices of any state in the country.

	<p>"He wants people to pay more at the pump so they use less gasoline, that's not an ancillary part of the law, that's the goal of the law," says Myers,</p> <p>'Cap and invest' will soon become a cost of doing for business in Washington state, not just for oil and gas companies, but any manufacturer that produces greenhouse gasses with few exceptions. One of the exceptions is public utility companies.</p> <p>"The last people you should trust on gas prices are the gas and oil companies," the Inslee told FOX 13.</p> <p>"They've got the foot on the neck of drivers of Washington state and I'm not happy about it."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Russia reaches out to Iran to counter West</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/12/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#putin-to-travel-to-tehran-next-week-as-he-seeks-to-build-support">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/12/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#putin-to-travel-to-tehran-next-week-as-he-seeks-to-build-support</a>
GIST	<p>President Vladimir V. Putin will visit Tehran next week for <a href="#">meetings with the leaders of Iran and Turkey</a>, taking him into challenging diplomatic terrain as he seeks to burnish ties with two nations sometimes aligned, and sometimes sharply at odds, with Russia and with each other.</p> <p>Mr. Putin, who radically limited his travel during the pandemic, has been engaging in a spree of recent diplomacy, seeking to shore up military and economic backing with non-Western countries to counter the West's military assistance to Ukraine and its sanctions against Russia.</p> <p>On a visit to Central Asia last week, his first foreign trip since Russia invaded Ukraine, Mr. Putin — who had recently compared himself to Peter the Great — held court among his close allies and insisted that the war was going according to plan.</p> <p>Mr. Putin's latest diplomatic push comes as President Biden prepares to travel to the Middle East this week to meet the leaders of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States.</p> <p>Mr. Biden's national security adviser said on Monday that Russia was <a href="#">seeking drones</a> from Iran, including those capable of firing missiles, to make up for its scarcity of unmanned, armed surveillance aircraft on the battlefield. Analysts say that Russia also sees Iran as a newly important economic partner, offering a trade route and expertise in circumventing sanctions and exporting oil.</p> <p>But Mr. Putin may also have to soothe relations with Iran as Russia <a href="#">eats into its share of the global oil market</a>, while trying to find common ground with Turkey, a NATO member. Over Moscow's objections, Turkey recently lifted its objections to <a href="#">the alliance expanding</a> along Russia's borders.</p> <p>High fuel prices have buoyed Russia's revenues as it has made gradual military gains in Ukraine, but Western sanctions have still wounded its economy and restricted its ability to build or buy technology for military use.</p> <p>In Tehran, the Iranian capital, Mr. Putin will also hold peace talks on Syria, a decade-old conflict in which Iran and Russia have backed the government and Turkey has supported an opposing rebel faction. Mr. Putin will meet with President Ebrahim Raisi of Iran and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, as well as holding separate meetings with each, Dmitri S. Peskov, the Kremlin's spokesman, told reporters on Tuesday.</p> <p>Mr. Erdogan, whose country shares the Black Sea coast with both Russia and Ukraine, has emerged as the most active mediator between Mr. Putin and President Volodymyr Zelensky. Turkey has been in talks to try to overcome Russia's blockade of more than 20 million tons of Ukrainian grain exports, which has been intensifying a global food crisis.</p> <p>Turkey will host delegations from Ukraine, Russia and the United Nations in Istanbul on Wednesday for negotiations on resuming grain shipments, Turkey's Defense Ministry said.</p>

	<p>Iran, long a Russian ally in its confrontation with the West, is becoming even more central to Mr. Putin's diplomacy because of the war in Ukraine. Mr. Putin met with Mr. Raisi on the sidelines of a regional summit in Turkmenistan last month, and spoke to him on the phone in early June, according to the Kremlin.</p> <p>"Our relationship is of a truly deep, strategic character," Mr. Putin told Mr. Raisi in Turkmenistan, noting that trade between the two countries was up 81 percent last year.</p> <p>At a summit meeting in Uzbekistan in September, Iran is expected to join a multilateral security group, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which already includes Russia and China. Sergey V. Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, last month <a href="#">praised Iran's accession</a> as a step that would strengthen the organization "as one of the key centers of the emerging multipolar world order," diluting the global influence of the United States.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Invasion, sanctions change Russia, Iran link</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/12/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#the-invasion-of-ukraine-and-sanctions-have-changed-the-dynamic-between-iran-and-russia">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/12/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#the-invasion-of-ukraine-and-sanctions-have-changed-the-dynamic-between-iran-and-russia</a>
GIST	<p>The Western backlash to Russia's invasion of Ukraine has pushed Moscow closer to Tehran.</p> <p>Before the war, Russia was eager to maintain relationships with Israel and Arab countries in the Middle East rather than appear too close to Iran. But amid the crush of sanctions against Russia, that dynamic has changed.</p> <p>Analysts say Russia sees in Iran an ally that can help it circumvent sanctions. Iranian officials have openly said that they have become experts in navigating economic sanctions imposed by the United States and can share their knowledge and strategy with Russia.</p> <p>"Iranians have plenty of experience and channels they have used to circumvent sanctions, and they can provide corridors for Russian goods to travel through Iran to other places," said Ali Vaez, the Iran project director at the International Crisis Group. "This is all beneficial to Russia."</p> <p>The continuing international talks about Iran's nuclear program, which include the United States and the European Union as well as Russia, are giving the Kremlin some leverage. After it invaded Ukraine in February, Moscow demanded that it be given a sanctions exemption to secure its economic interests from the Iran nuclear deal. Russia has since dropped that demand, Mr. Vaez said, because of Iran's offer to help it navigate sanctions.</p> <p>But the extent of Iran's support for Russia's military campaign remains unclear. President Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said on Monday that it was not known whether Iran had already sent any of its drones to Russia, but that the United States had information <a href="#">that indicated that Iran was preparing to train Russian troops</a> to use them as soon as this month.</p> <p>"Cooperation between Iran and the Russian Federation in the area of new technology dates back to before the Ukraine war," a spokesman for Iran's foreign ministry, Nasser Kanani, said on Tuesday in response to Mr. Sullivan's claims. "There has been no particular development at this current time."</p> <p>While Russia has enjoyed an overwhelming artillery superiority along hundreds of miles of front lines in Ukraine, Moscow's forces have been suffering from the lack of a sufficient number of reconnaissance and combat drones that would allow them to hit Ukrainian targets with better precision.</p> <p>The scarcity has been aggravated with the arrival of advanced HIMARS rocket launchers supplied by the United States that Ukraine says have allowed it to hit Russian munitions depots and command posts deep in the rear of the Russian positions.</p>

HEADLINE	<b>07/12 ESA cuts ties with Russia on Mars mission</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/12/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#esa-russia-mars-mission">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/12/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#esa-russia-mars-mission</a>
GIST	<p>The European Space Agency is formally ending its partnership with Russia on a rover mission to explore the surface of Mars, the agency's chief said on Tuesday, citing Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>ESA, an intergovernmental organization with 22 member nations, paused cooperation with Roscosmos, Russia's state space agency, in March to comply with Western sanctions, after ESA's leadership council agreed unanimously on the "impossibility" of continuing to work together under the circumstances.</p> <p>As an intergovernmental organization whose mandate was to develop and implement space programs "in full respect with European values," the agency said in a <a href="#">news release</a> at the time, "we deeply deplore the human casualties and tragic consequences of the aggression towards Ukraine."</p> <p>Before the suspension, ESA and Roscosmos were working jointly on the ExoMars mission with the goal of exploring the surface of Mars. A jewel of the project, Europe's first robotic rover on Mars, was expected to launch this fall.</p> <p>That temporary suspension has now been made final. As the war grinds on and the West attempts to <a href="#">further isolate Russia</a>, Josef Aschbacher, ESA's director general, announced on Tuesday that ties on the rover mission had been cut for good.</p> <p>"As a consequence, Council mandated me to officially terminate the currently suspended cooperation with Roscosmos on the ExoMars Rover and Surface Platform mission," he <a href="#">wrote on Twitter</a>.</p> <p>This is not the first break since the war began in the longstanding cooperation between Russia and ESA. In February, Roscosmos stopped launches of its Soyuz rocket at an ESA launchpad in French Guiana and said it would remove the 87 Russian personnel working at the site.</p> <p>However, diplomatic cooperation on space research has often persisted through international conflict, and that remains true for some projects involving Russia.</p> <p>The United States and Russia are continuing to work together on the International Space Station, an orbital science laboratory run primarily by NASA and Roscosmos. The station, which was <a href="#">proposed as a symbolic post-Cold War monument</a>, has intertwined Washington and Moscow for two decades, even as relations between the nations have frayed.</p> <p>Contributions from both sides are needed <a href="#">to keep the outpost functioning</a>. The space station depends on electricity from the American section and needs engines from Russian spacecraft to maintain its altitude in orbit.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/13 China pushes US away on Russia, Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/13/world/asia/china-united-states-russia-ukraine.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/13/world/asia/china-united-states-russia-ukraine.html</a>
GIST	<p>When the secretary of state, Antony J. Blinken, <a href="#">pressed China</a> this weekend to ditch its support of Russia's war in Ukraine, he was pushing up against a red line now firmly entrenched in Beijing.</p> <p>The Chinese foreign minister, Wang Yi, double downed on his country's position, retorting that Beijing was neutral and lashing out at the United States for "China phobia" and policies that offered "a dead end" with no way out.</p> <p>The standoff, after <a href="#">the G20 meeting</a> in Bali, showed how bound the leader of China, Xi Jinping, is to the battlefield fortunes of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, and <a href="#">how unlikely</a> he is to help the United</p>

States secure an end to the Ukraine conflict. It also underscored the deep chasms in a relationship that is getting worse, as the Biden administration tries to come up with a [cohesive China policy](#).

“For Chinese strategists, if the war ends with Russia being severely defeated, China would face a far worse geostrategic environment than today,” said Zhao Tong, a research scholar at Princeton University’s Science and Global Security Program.

Despite being rich and powerful, China fears being isolated without a viable Russia at its side, left to fend for itself against what Beijing sees as the “strategic aggression of the U.S.-led West,” he said.

The worst outcome for Beijing, he added, is a defeated Russia and a pro-Western government in Moscow.

From the outset of the war, Washington was able, with the threat of heavy sanctions, to dissuade China from providing weapons and economic assistance to Russia. China claims it is neutral since it has refrained from such explicit support.

Last week, the Chinese authorities deleted posts by the White House and the State Department on China’s social media platforms that described Washington’s policies on NATO, and Hong Kong. “The PRC ought to allow the Chinese people to see what American leaders say, as the American people hear what Chinese leaders say,” the U.S. Ambassador to China, Nicholas Burns, posted on Twitter after the censorship, referring to the People’s Republic of China.

China’s tough language after the Bali meeting was calculated to show that Mr. Wang had stood up to an implacable United States, said Yun Sun, the director of the China program at the Stimson Center in Washington.

The statement implied that “the U.S. has to lower its head and bow,” an image that fit with Beijing’s conclusion that Mr. Biden was “weak,” and that the Democrats were about to lose the mid-term elections, she said.

“Beijing doesn’t believe Biden will change the direction of the China policy,” Ms. Sun. “So what’s left is to speak tough, stand their position and squeeze Washington as hard as possible.”

A Chinese expert on U.S.-China relations, Wang Huiyao, the president of the Center for China and Globalization, which advises China’s government, said the atmospherics at the Bali meeting were better than in recent encounters between the American and Chinese officials.

But of the United States, he said, “the main thing is to stop treating China as the biggest imaginary enemy, so that we can better mobilize the international community and make a more positive response” to Russia.

Also at stake in Bali was a possible meeting later in the year between President Biden and Mr. Xi. Both sides were gauging whether it was worthwhile for the two men, who have not met in person since Mr. Biden won the election, to try and defuse the worst of the tensions.

Senior American and Chinese officials have had about half a dozen meetings, Ms. Sun said. And both sides, she said, sense a crisis is at hand, believing that it would take the two top leaders to at least come up with some ground rules.

If talks between Mr. Xi and Mr. Biden went badly, it could signal whether the world will revert to a Cold War-like division of two well-armed blocs: one led by the United States and its democratic partners, the other anchored by China, Russia and other similarly-minded autocracies.

At a NATO summit in early July, the United States and its western allies formally declared that China was a systemic “challenge,” an action that drew [withering denunciation from Beijing](#).

Washington has devised a series of plans to counter China, but few of them have won firm support in the region.

A coalition between the United States, Japan, Australia and India, known as the Quad, is meant to show solidarity in the Asia-Pacific region, but India buys huge quantities of oil from Russia; a new U.S.-led economic group of 14 countries, [the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework](#), received a lukewarm reception from its members since it fails to offer tariff reductions for goods entering the United States; and an agreement for the United States and Britain to share technology to help Australia deploy nuclear-powered submarines remains vague.

This week, Richard Marles, who has been Australia's defense minister for less than two months, said in a speech in Washington that a "catastrophic failure of deterrence" was at hand if the United States did not increase its military cooperation with his country. China has increased its presence in the South Pacific, [reaching a security pact this year with the Solomon Islands](#). In response, Vice President Kamala Harris announced Wednesday the opening of two new embassies in the region. One is planned for Kiribati, another in Tonga, she said, speaking virtually to regional leaders.

When the United States first opened relations with China 50 years ago, it was relatively easy for Washington to pry China away from the Soviet Union.

Poor and isolated, China needed friends, and President Richard M. Nixon persuaded the leader, Mao Zedong, to join the side of the United States during the Cold War. By 1972 when Mr. Nixon visited China, the two big Communist powers, China and the Soviet Union, had also fallen out over differences in ideology and other matters.

The relationship between Washington and Beijing became so close that for a while they even shared joint intelligence facilities, located in China's western province of Xinjiang, aimed at the Soviet Union.

"The table is turned," Mr. Zhao said, of the current relationship. "Beijing is in an intense ideological competition with Washington and genuinely shares Moscow's perspectives on many domestic and international issues."

It was "unrealistic," Mr. Zhao said, "to expect China to take a value-neutral approach in managing the U.S.-China-Russia trilateral relationship and to switch sides just based on calculations of power balance and material interests."

Mr. Xi often refers in speeches to great changes in the world that have not been seen before, a nod to China's growing ideological divide with the United States and its allies.

In an address last month to a gathering of the group of emerging economies, known as BRICS, Mr. Xi criticized Washington and its allies, for "expanding military alliances and seeking ones own security at the expense of other countries' security."

The administration's effort to get more cooperation from China on Ukraine has been complicated by the lack of economic incentive.

China is facing a slowdown, in part over its insistence on eliminating virtually all Covid infections through tight lockdowns and extensive restrictions. The government is unlikely to meet its goal of 5.5 percent growth for 2022.

With energy costs soaring, Russian oil offers some relief. China is able to buy large quantities at a discount from the current market price.



	<p>“China is definitely supporting Russia with these purchases, and it is a puzzle why they haven’t pushed for a bigger discount,” said Simon Johnson, professor of global economics at the Sloan School of Management at MIT.</p> <p>The administration’s efforts to find common ground on certain issues, such as climate change and trade, have been dismissed by Beijing, sometimes with derision.</p> <p>“The U.S. wants climate change cooperation to be an ‘oasis’ of U.S.-China relations,” Mr. Wang said last year after talking with the American climate envoy, John Kerry. “However, if the oasis is surrounded by deserts then sooner or later, the ‘oasis’ will be desertified.”</p> <p>The testy exchange between Mr. Blinken and Mr. Wang was only the most recent round of blustery confrontation, said Charles A. Kupchan, professor of international relations at Georgetown University. But it is still possible, he said, for the administration to drive a wedge between China and Russia.</p> <p>“Washington should explore whether a reset with China and a strategy that entails a better mix of containment and engagement,” he added, “can help tame the rivalry with Beijing, and ultimately hem in Moscow.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Wave of repression spreads in Iran</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/world/middleeast/iran-repression-dissidents-artists.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/world/middleeast/iran-repression-dissidents-artists.html</a>
GIST	<p>In a new crackdown on dissidents and artists, Iran has arrested three renowned filmmakers within the past week, as well as a prominent reformist politician and the family members of protesters killed in anti-government uprisings in 2019.</p> <p>The directors, Jaffar Panahi, Mohammad Rasolouf and Mostafa Aleahmad, have all been vocal critics of the government. Mr. Rasolouf recently organized a <a href="#">social media campaign</a> that called for the country’s security forces facing protesters to put down their weapons and join the people.</p> <p>The latest arrests come as a new chief takes over the powerful intelligence wing of the Revolutionary Guards Corps, following <a href="#">the ouster</a> in late June of its former head, Hossein Taeb. Mr. Taeb, an influential and feared figure, was removed from his job after a series of embarrassing failures associated with Israel’s campaign to <a href="#">target Iranian nuclear and military officials and sites</a>, according to analysts in both countries.</p> <p>Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said in a public speech in late June that the “psychological safety” of Iranians was threatened by commentary on the web and on social media, and called for the authorities to take measures to control content similar to those enacted during the more repressive 1980s.</p> <p>The Center for Human Rights in Iran, an independent, New York-based advocacy group, said <a href="#">at least 15</a> activists and dissidents had been arrested in Iran so far this month.</p> <p>“The new I.R.G.C. intelligence chief appears intent on swiftly bringing about a new reign of terror just as Khamenei demanded a few weeks ago,” Hadi Ghamei, the director of the organization, said in an interview. “The arbitrary mass arrests are an attempt to silence leading voices and opinion makers.”</p> <p>In May, a different group of prominent <a href="#">documentary filmmakers</a> was arrested briefly and then released pending trial.</p> <p>The latest arrests sparked an outcry among international film festivals. In a statement, the Cannes Film Festival demanded the immediate release of the filmmakers and condemned what it called “the wave of repression obviously in progress in Iran against its artists.”</p> <p>Mr. Panahi won the Berlin International Film Festival’s top Golden Bear award in 2015 for his movie “Taxi,” in which he posed as a cabdriver and discussed social issues with passengers, and the Venice</p>

International Film Festival's Golden Lion award in 2000 for "The Circle," about the challenges Iranian women face as they fight for more rights in a conservative society.

Mr. Rasolouf tackled the subject of the death penalty in Iran in "There is No Evil," which won Berlin's top prize in 2020. He also won a prize at Cannes in 2011 for his film "Goodbye," which tells the familiar story of young professionals desperate to leave Iran.

Both men had previously been prosecuted on murky charges. Mr. Panahi was sentenced to six years in prison in 2011, was banned from leaving the country and was banned from making movies for 20 years on charges of creating propaganda against the government. Mr. Rasolouf was sentenced in 2019 to a year in prison, and was given a two-year ban on making films and on leaving the country, on charges of colluding with the enemy against national security.

Kaveh Farnam, a Dubai-based producer who has collaborated with Mr. Rasolouf on his films since 2015, said the government's intention was to silence artists. "Their goal is only to create fear and terror among the cinema and artistic community so nobody dares to criticize them," he said. "They think if they can shut down Rasolouf and Panahi, everyone else will be silenced, too."

Mr. Rasolouf and Mr. Aleahmad were arrested on July 8 when security forces raided their homes and offices and confiscated their equipment, according to Mr. Farnam. They were taken to Evin prison and placed in solitary confinement, where prisoners typically undergo intense interrogation, he said.

On Monday, a group of the men's supporters, including Mr. Panahi, gathered outside the prison to demand their release. Mr. Panahi was called to the prosecutor's office inside the prison, but when he went there, accompanied by a lawyer and another film associate, he was also arrested, said Mr. Farnam.

The politician affiliated with the reformist faction who was also arrested in the crackdown, Mostafa Tajzadeh, is a former minister and adviser to the president. Mr. Tajzadeh said in a television interview that he no longer believed in the Islamic Republic and that Iranians were better off during the reign of the Shah before the 1979 revolution. Mr. Tajzadeh, in talks on social media and in [tweets](#), has blamed Mr. Khamenei for much of the country's current woes, from corruption to economic hardship.

At least eight family members of protesters killed in the November 2019 anti-government uprising, including parents and siblings, were also arrested. The families of those protesters have become vocal critics of the government, demanding accountability for the deaths of their loved ones.

The judiciary has not announced the reason for the arrests nor the charges the detainees face. But their families, colleagues and media reports offer a clue.

Fars News, affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards, reported that Mr. Tajzadeh was arrested on charges of "acting against national security" and "publishing lies with the intent to disturb the public mind."

The state news agency IRNA reported that Mr. Rasolouf and Mr. Aleahmad were communicating with Iran's enemies to create a public crisis and disturb the "psychological security" of the public, because they were collecting signatures demanding accountability after a high-rise collapsed in the city of Abadan in May, killing more than 40 people.

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HEADLINE	07/12 Concern: CDC outdated data collection
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/world/cdc-international-travel.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/world/cdc-international-travel.html</a>
GIST	The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's reliance on outdated systems to collect and analyze data on international air travelers continues to hamper its ability to respond quickly to disease threats, according to a <a href="#">new report</a> by the Government Accountability Office.

The report said that limitations in how the C.D.C. collects and manages contact information for air travelers makes it difficult to conduct contact tracing and track public health risks. The agency, the G.A.O. found, “is unable to quickly and accurately identify the number of passengers exposed to a specific infected passenger on a flight.”

Two and a half years after the coronavirus began to spread across the globe, the G.A.O. said in a statement on Tuesday that the pandemic “highlighted how unprepared the U.S. public health and aviation systems are to respond to public health threats.”

The G.A.O.’s findings carry a sense of urgency this summer, as tourism and travel have begun to approach prepandemic levels even though [the Omicron subvariant known as BA.5](#) is fueling a surge in cases in many countries.

In the United States, reported cases have been averaging around [100,000 a day](#) — a figure that is [likely to be undercounted](#) given an increasing reliance on at-home testing and the closures of mass testing sites.

The C.D.C. did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Tuesday. The G.A.O. did note some changes the agency had made, but said its data systems still needed “substantial improvement.” It said that the C.D.C. had “concurred with the recommendations” in its report, including that the agency redesign its data system or develop a new one.

U.S. authorities have made efforts to trace travelers who may have contracted Covid-19 abroad. For example, in late November, when Omicron cases were rising in southern Africa, officials directed airlines to share contact information for [passengers who flew from the region into the United States](#).

The C.D.C.’s data management system was developed in the mid-2000s, the G.A.O. report said, and “was not designed for rapid assessment or aggregation of public health data across individual cases.” That hobbled the agency, the report said, meaning the C.D.C. “is not positioned to efficiently analyze and disseminate data to inform public health policies and respond to disease threats.”

Concerns have been raised about the global transmission of highly infectious diseases since the SARS epidemic in the early 2000s.

“More than any other mode of transportation, air travel creates the potential for infectious diseases to move quickly from one part of the world to another,” the report said.

The data system used by the C.D.C. prompted contact investigations from about 80 to 130 flights each year from 2015 to 2019, and about 25,000 flights in 2020, according to the report.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 WHO: pandemic still a health emergency</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/world/who-covid-health-emergency.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/world/who-covid-health-emergency.html</a>
GIST	<p>With known coronavirus cases rising significantly across the globe, continued Omicron evolution and increased pressure on public health systems, the World Health Organization on Tuesday said that the pandemic remains a public health emergency.</p> <p>The agency, which is part of the United Nations, first declared the coronavirus outbreaks a “public health emergency of international concern” on Jan. 30, 2020, nearly two and a half years ago.</p> <p>The decision to continue the global emergency status was based on several factors, including that “surveillance has reduced significantly — including testing and sequencing — making it increasingly difficult to assess the impact of variants on transmission, disease characteristics and the effectiveness of countermeasures,” according to Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director general of the W.H.O.</p>

“The virus is running freely and countries are not effectively managing the disease burden based on their capacity, in terms of both hospitalization for acute cases and the expanding number of people with post-Covid-19 condition — often referred to as long Covid,” he said at a news conference in Geneva.

As of Monday, an average of more than [930,000](#) newly confirmed virus cases are being reported globally each day, according to the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. That is a 37 percent rise over the last two weeks. In the same period, there has been an average of more than [1,700 deaths](#), an 18 percent increase, Johns Hopkins data shows.

The reported cases are considered a significant undercount of the true infection rate, as the W.H.O. noted, because testing and tracking have been curtailed. There is waning immunity in the wealthy nations that have had access to vaccines for about one and half years, though the vaccines remain highly protective against the worst outcomes.

In addition, countries like the United States have been throwing out vaccine doses, while not even [two-thirds](#) of the world population is fully vaccinated, according to the [Our World in Data](#) project at the University of Oxford.

Those vaccines, while valuable, have become dated. U.S. regulators committed last week to updating the 2020 vaccine recipes for this fall’s booster campaign with new formulas meant to defend against the ultra-contagious Omicron subvariants.

Those rapidly spreading subvariants, known as BA.4 and BA.5, are driving a summertime surge of the coronavirus in Europe, health officials say. BA.5 [is dominant among new cases](#) in the United States, where rising test positivity rates suggest that many places around the country are experiencing [new outbreaks](#) of infections.

As of the week ending Saturday, BA.5 made up 65 percent of new cases in the United States and BA.4 made up 16 percent, according to [estimates](#) released on Tuesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Combined, the two subvariants [accounted](#) for about 52 percent of new cases only two weeks ago.

“The reporting of BA.5 is increasing in terms of the reports, and has increased substantially over the last four weeks alone,” said Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove, the W.H.O.’s Covid-19 technical lead. “We expect that trend to continue around the world, but we will continue to assess this as we go forward. We need more data to be able to do that — to look again at transmissibility and escape severity.”

The W.H.O.’s emergency committee convened virtually on Friday to assess the course of the pandemic, and decided it continued [to meet the criteria](#) of a health emergency.

“There is a major disconnect in Covid-19 risk perception between scientific communities, political leaders and the general public,” Dr. Tedros said on Tuesday. “Covid-19 is nowhere near over.”

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Senate confirms new ATF director</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/us/politics/steven-dettelbach-atf-guns.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/us/politics/steven-dettelbach-atf-guns.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Senate on Tuesday narrowly confirmed Steven M. Dettelbach to run the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, giving the agency responsible for marshaling the federal response to gun violence its first permanent leader in seven years.</p> <p>Mr. Dettelbach, a former federal prosecutor from Ohio, was confirmed by a 48-to-46 vote. He was backed by every Democrat who voted as well as two Republicans, Susan Collins of Maine and Rob Portman of Ohio.</p> <p>The confirmation of Mr. Dettelbach, 57, who was President Biden’s second choice for the job, represented a victory for the White House, which has tried to patch together a response to a surge in</p>

gun-related crime and mass shootings without the use of universal background checks and an assault weapons ban, its preferred policy tools.

West Wing officials regarded Mr. Dettelbach's confirmation to be as important, at least in the short term, as the modest bipartisan gun control measure passed by Congress and signed into law by the president last month.

Mr. Dettelbach was expected to be sworn in soon after the vote so he could begin to tackle the daunting task of energizing a bureau grappling with an overwhelming workload, implacable opposition from the U.S. gun lobby, technological constraints, sagging morale and chronic funding shortfalls that have left field offices short on staff needed to investigate crimes and inspect gun dealers.

"He's facing a very tall task," said Senator Angus King, a political independent from Maine who caucuses with Democrats and last year sunk the nomination of Mr. Biden's first choice to run the agency, David Chipman, over concerns about his fiery temperament.

"Dettelbach's first job, and he's accomplished it just by being confirmed, is to improve morale at A.T.F. after nearly eight years without someone at the helm," Mr. King added after casting his vote for Mr. Dettelbach. "The second job is finding the right people, at the top, to execute what he wants to accomplish. It's a rebuilding exercise."

John Feinblatt, the president of Everytown for Gun Safety, a group funded by former Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York, called the Senate vote "a watershed victory for the gun safety movement and further proof that the Senate logjam around this life-or-death issue is finally breaking."

Opposition to Mr. Dettelbach's confirmation, initially fierce, slackened after the recent mass shootings in Buffalo; Uvalde, Texas; and Highland Park, Ill., prompted calls for action in Washington. Democratic leaders were forced to resort to a procedural move to overcome a deadlock in the Judiciary Committee last month, but while most Republicans opposed the pick, they did so without much vehemence.

"There were questions about his record, but I agree that the A.T.F. definitely needs a permanent leader," Senator Roy Blunt, Republican of Missouri, said after voting against the nomination on Tuesday.

Mr. Dettelbach, a graduate of Harvard Law School, worked in a series of prosecutorial posts in Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Ohio before becoming the U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, which includes Cleveland. He held that post under President Barack Obama and served from 2009 to 2016.

Since the spring, he has quietly worked the phones to assure the agency's rank and file that he appreciated their hard work during his under-the-radar nomination process, which has earned him the quiet backing of career officials who had been hostile to Mr. Chipman.

Mr. Dettelbach ran unsuccessfully for Ohio attorney general in 2018 as a Democrat, but he took great pains to portray himself publicly as a career prosecutor who believes that politics play "no role in law enforcement," as he put it at his confirmation hearing. That stance was intended to draw a contrast with Mr. Chipman, whose blistering criticism of Republicans and gun rights organizations had provoked a backlash that ultimately forced the administration to pull his nomination.

The bureau that Mr. Dettelbach inherits has long been hamstrung by a series of laws, passed at the behest of the National Rifle Association and other groups that favor gun rights, that have limited the agency's ability to conduct electronic gun traces or share basic firearms data with the public.

But the agency plays an outsize role in putting in place nearly all the gun control steps taken by Mr. Biden through executive authority — including a crackdown on the sale of homemade "ghost guns" and

the administration's promise to more closely scrutinize federally licensed gun dealers, which are often the source of guns used in crimes.

In addition, the agency is also expected to be a central player in establishing the new gun law, particularly provisions embedded in the bill that make it easier for prosecutors to bring federal weapons trafficking charges.

"It's extremely timely and important for him to be getting into the job right now," said Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Democrat of New York, who worked on the trafficking provisions. "I want them to bring trafficking cases every day."

Mr. Dettelbach's path to his new job was elliptical. Justice Department officials, stung by Mr. Chipman's downfall, were skeptical about announcing a new nominee to be the permanent director of the agency. Instead, they favored continuing the tenure of the bureau's interim director, Marvin Richardson, a career agency official.

But after The New York Times reported that Mr. Richardson had attended a gun industry-sponsored event in Las Vegas, White House officials, under pressure from gun control groups, began a search for less polarizing potential candidates.

They settled on Mr. Dettelbach, who was well liked inside the Justice Department and was looking for a new job after trying without success to be reappointed to his old position as U.S. attorney in northern Ohio.

Some gun control activists initially questioned whether Mr. Dettelbach, known for his agreeable, low-key personality, would be tough enough to overhaul the bureau. But on Tuesday, their response was celebratory, if a bit tempered by the challenges he faces.

"This is a historic day," said Josh Scharff, senior counsel with the legal arm of Brady, a gun safety group that pressed the White House to pick a permanent director.

Mr. Scharff said he hoped that Mr. Dettelbach would quickly put in place changes necessary to reduce gun trafficking and improve the agency's oversight of the gun industry.

"He'll be an excellent leader of A.T.F. and will quickly and effectively modernize A.T.F. to catalyze the agency's public safety mission," he added.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Looming Obamacare premium hikes</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/12/congress-grapples-looming-obamacare-premium-hikes/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/12/congress-grapples-looming-obamacare-premium-hikes/</a>
GIST	<p>Democratic lawmakers making a last-ditch attempt to pass a tax and spending bill are now weighing whether to extend pandemic-era Obamacare subsidies to avoid skyrocketing premiums that will hit just as voters head to the polls in November.</p> <p>Senate Democrats negotiating the broad package are under pressure to include additional funding for the subsidies. Democrats approved the subsidies in March 2021 as part of a \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package. The subsidies are set to expire on Dec. 31. If the subsidies are not extended, health policy experts say, premiums in the 33 states that use the government health care marketplace will rise by 53% as people begin shopping for new plans in November.</p> <p>"Millions of Americans face the prospect of losing health care coverage or seeing their premiums spike," a group of 57 Democratic House members, many from battleground districts, recently wrote to Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer, New York Democrat, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, California Democrat.</p>



Senate Democrats on Monday didn't rule out adding extended Obamacare subsidies to the package, which they hope to pass this month.

Also in the negotiations are money to bolster Medicare, a plan to lower some prescription drug prices and a slate of clean energy tax credits. The measure would be funded with a 3.8% tax on pass-through business income.

Adding permanent, enhanced Obamacare subsidies to the package would cost more than \$200 billion over the next decade. It could complicate negotiations among Democrats to finalize the tax and spend package under discussion. The party hopes to pass the bill unilaterally using a budgetary tactic that would circumvent a Republican filibuster in the Senate. That means all 50 Democrats would have to support the final bill.

SEE ALSO: Jan. 6 committee refers Trump to Justice Department over possible witness tampering

A key Democratic negotiator, Sen. Joe Manchin III of West Virginia, hasn't ruled out including the Obamacare subsidies in the package, but he said the subsidies should be directed toward individuals at the lower end of the income scale.

Democrats also might consider another temporary extension.

"I haven't heard them mentioned, but it doesn't mean they aren't on the agenda," Senate Majority Whip Richard J. Durbin, Illinois Democrat, said when asked whether negotiators were discussing adding the subsidies to the package.

The pandemic aid package approved in March 2021 broadened eligibility for Obamacare subsidies to those earning up to 400% of the poverty level.

As a result, earners well over the poverty line are now eligible.

Brian Blase of the Galen Institute, a public policy research organization, calculated that a family of four headed by a 60-year-old earning \$240,000 per year "will now qualify for a subsidy of nearly \$9,000."

Mr. Blase is among a group of health care policy experts who say the subsidies drive up costs for consumers and should end.

The libertarian Cato Institute's director of health policy studies, Michael F. Cannon, said health insurance companies stand to benefit the most from continuing the subsidies and are lobbying Congress for an extension "because the subsidies are so lucrative and they don't want the gravy train to stop running."

Left-leaning policy groups say the Obamacare subsidies have increased the number of people covered by health insurance during the Biden administration.

Taking away the subsidies would raise net premiums by 53%, likely resulting in 3 million people dropping coverage, said Emily R. Gee, vice president and coordinator of health policy at the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank.

Ms. Gee said fewer enrollees will change the risk pool and insurers will raise rates as a result.

"That is what drives individual insurance company rates up," Ms. Gee said.

For Democrats, rising rates and ending subsidies could be a recipe for disaster in the midterm elections as voters, increasingly frustrated with inflation and high gas prices, face additional costs for health insurance.

	<p>Insurers in some states are already proposing substantial rate increases. They are basing rates on the assumption that the subsidies will not be extended and people will drop coverage, though they are not saying the subsidies are the main reason for drastic hikes.</p> <p>New York state health insurers last month proposed a 19% rate increase. The insurers blamed additional costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, rising medical costs and inflation.</p> <p>Insurers in the Connecticut health care marketplace are seeking an average increase of 20% for next year. They say the driving factors are the high costs of drugs, medical care, and treatment and testing for COVID-19.</p> <p>Health insurers in the state said the looming end of enhanced Obamacare subsidies was also a factor.</p> <p>Mr. Cannon said he is not surprised at the rate increases.</p> <p>“When you subsidize something, the price goes up,” Mr. Cannon said. “This is not hard. If you want insurers and find more efficient, affordable ways of doing things, if you want providers to find more efficient, affordable ways of doing things, you need to stop subsidizing them so heavily.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/12 WHO: ‘sex not limited to male or female’</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/12/who-sex-not-limited-male-or-female/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/12/who-sex-not-limited-male-or-female/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>The World Health Organization says sex “is not limited to male or female” as it plans to update a manual used by public health professionals to recognize gender and sexual diversity, wading into the thorny debate about whether gender is strictly binary or something more complicated.</p> <p>The WHO will solicit feedback through the fall on the update to its manual, which details how gender norms, roles and relations affect health-related behaviors and outcomes.</p> <p>One key area of focus is gaining attention.</p> <p>The WHO said it is “going beyond non-binary approaches to gender and health to recognize gender and sexual diversity, or the concepts that gender identity exists on a continuum and that sex is not limited to male or female.”</p> <p>The health body is still working on the guidance, but it could find itself wrapped in a wider debate about sex, typically defined by biological traits, and gender, which typically refers to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones.</p> <p>In the U.S., some states have cracked down on transgender athletes participating in female sports, and Texas is investigating gender-affirming care as child abuse.</p> <p>For years, states and localities have debated whether bathrooms should be divided by sex and some parent groups do not want school curricula for younger students to involve talk of gender identity.</p> <p>While the final guidance still has to be determined, critics said the WHO risks undermining health advice for professionals.</p> <p>Professor Jenny Gamble, a midwifery expert from Coventry University, described the change as “problematic” in an interview with The Daily Mail.</p> <p>“It is a dismissal of basic biology — and mistake,” she said. “Biology is a key determinant of health and illness.</p>

	<p>“Not being clear about basic biology opens the door to a range of problems, including very poor health communication but also distorted data,” she said.</p> <p>The WHO this month also said it will expand on the concept of intersectionality, “which looks at how gender power dynamics interact with other hierarchies of privilege or disadvantage, resulting in inequality and differential health outcomes for different people.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/12 Starbucks closing 16 stores: safety issues</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/business/article/Starbucks-closing-16-US-stores-for-safety-issues-17300632.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/business/article/Starbucks-closing-16-US-stores-for-safety-issues-17300632.php</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Starbucks is closing 16 stores around the country because of repeated safety issues, including drug use and other disruptive behaviors that threaten staff.</p> <p>The coffee giant is closing six stores in its hometown of Seattle, six in Los Angeles, two in Portland, Oregon and one each in Philadelphia and Washington. Starbucks said employees at those stores will be given the opportunity to transfer to other stores.</p> <p>Starbucks said Tuesday the closures are part of a larger effort to respond to staff concerns and make sure stores are safe and welcoming. In a letter to employees, Starbucks’ senior vice presidents of operations Debbie Stroud and Denise Nelson said the company’s stores aren’t immune from problems like rising drug use and a growing mental health crisis.</p> <p>“We know these challenges can, at times, play out within our stores too. We read every incident report you file — it’s a lot,” Stroud and Nelson wrote.</p> <p>But the company also faced criticism from some workers who said they weren’t consulted or given any options besides closure.</p> <p>“We think it is not fair that we were not allowed to be a part of this decision about our working conditions, nor for Starbucks to claim they could not provide a safe experience for our workplace,” said Mari Cosgrove, an employee at one of the Seattle stores that is closing.</p> <p>The closures took on heightened significance because of an ongoing unionization effort at Starbucks’ U.S. stores. More than 189 U.S. Starbucks stores have voted to unionize since late last year, according to the National Labor Relations Board. Starbucks opposes the unionization effort.</p> <p>Two of the Seattle stores that are closing have voted to unionize, while one of the Portland stores has petitioned to hold a union vote. Last month, Starbucks also closed a unionized store in Ithaca, New York, because of operational problems, including an overflowing grease trap.</p> <p>Starbucks Workers United, the labor group organizing the effort, said it intends to file unfair labor practice charges against Starbucks on behalf of the two unionized stores that are closing in Seattle.</p> <p>But Starbucks insisted the closures weren’t related to the unionization drive.</p> <p>“Opening and closing stores is part of our business operations,” a spokesperson for the company said. “This is really rooted in safe and welcoming stores.”</p> <p>U.S. labor law doesn’t prevent Starbucks from closing its stores for business reasons. But it can’t close a store — whether it’s unionized or not — in retaliation against labor organizers.</p> <p>In the letter to employees, Starbucks said it is willing to make adjustments to ensure store safety, including modifying operating hours and moving furniture — or removing it — in order to give employees a clearer view of the store. The company said it’s testing alarm systems and sensors to alert employees if someone is in a restroom.</p>

	<p>Starbucks also noted an effort — now in eight cities — called Outreach Worker, which connects store employees to nonprofit groups who can help with patrons who are chronically homeless, mentally ill or abusing drugs.</p> <p>The company also said restrooms at some stores might be closed if they become a safety hazard.</p> <p>That's a reversal from 2018, when Starbucks issued a policy allowing anyone to use its restrooms even if they didn't buy anything. That decision was made after a Starbucks employee called police to report two Black men who were denied the use of a restroom and asked to leave. The men, who were in Starbucks waiting for a business meeting, were arrested; they later reached a settlement with Starbucks.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 CEO: Google to slow hiring for rest of year</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-12/google-ceo-says-company-plans-to-slow-hiring-for-rest-of-year">https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-12/google-ceo-says-company-plans-to-slow-hiring-for-rest-of-year</a>
GIST	<p>Alphabet's Google plans to slow hiring for the remainder of the year in the face of a potential economic recession, Chief Executive Officer Sundar Pichai said Tuesday in an email to staff.</p> <p>Pichai said the company will focus on hiring "engineering, technical and other critical roles," in 2022 and 2023, according to a copy of the email viewed by Bloomberg News.</p> <p>"Moving forward, we need to be more entrepreneurial, working with greater urgency, sharper focus, and more hunger than we've shown on sunnier days," Pichai wrote. "In some cases, that means consolidating where investments overlap and streamlining processes."</p> <p>Historically, Google has remained relatively immune to the economic dips of the technology sector. The internet giant paused hiring after the financial crisis more than a decade ago, but has since regularly added waves of new employees for its main advertising business as well as areas such as smartphones, self-driving cars and wearable devices that aren't yet profitable. Google parent Alphabet, which employed almost 164,000 people as of March 31, has hired primarily in recent years for Google's cloud division and new fields like hardware.</p> <p>Google's move mirrors that of other tech companies. In May, Snap and Lyft said they would slow hiring. Several weeks later, Instacart said it would dial back job growth and Tesla followed with an announcement of a 10% reduction for its salaried workforce. Earlier this week, Google rival Microsoft announced it was cutting a small number of jobs. Meta Platforms also reduced its hiring plans because of concerns over economic conditions.</p> <p>In the email, Pichai said Google added 10,000 staffers during the second quarter and had "strong commitments" in the next few months to hire college recruits. Business Insider reported earlier on Google's plans.</p> <p><b>Here's the email:</b>  <i>Hi Googlers,</i>  <i>Hard to believe we're already through the first half of 2022. It's the right opportunity to thank everyone for the great work so far this year, and to share how my Leads and I are thinking about H2.</i></p> <p><i>The uncertain global economic outlook has been top of mind. Like all companies, we're not immune to economic headwinds. Something I cherish about our culture is that we've never viewed these types of challenges as obstacles. Instead, we've seen them as opportunities to deepen our focus and invest for the long term.</i></p> <p><i>In these moments, I turn to our mission: to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. It's what inspired me to join the company 18 years ago, and what makes me so</i></p>

*optimistic about the impact we are able to have on the world. Knowledge and computing are how we drive our mission forward. That's the lens we use to decide where to invest — whether it's in areas like Search, Cloud, YouTube, Platforms and Hardware, the teams that support them, or in the AI that enables more helpful products and services.*

*We help people and society when we focus on what we do best, and do it really well. The investments we've made in the first half of the year reflect this vision. In Q2 alone, we added approximately 10,000 Googlers, and have a strong number of commitments for Q3 start dates which reflects, in part, the seasonal college recruiting calendar. These are extraordinary numbers, and they show our excitement about long-term opportunities, even in uncertain times.*

*Because of the hiring progress achieved so far this year, we'll be slowing the pace of hiring for the rest of the year, while still supporting our most important opportunities. For the balance of 2022 and 2023, we'll focus our hiring on engineering, technical and other critical roles, and make sure the great talent we do hire is aligned with our long-term priorities.*

*Moving forward, we need to be more entrepreneurial, working with greater urgency, sharper focus, and more hunger than we've shown on sunnier days. In some cases, that means consolidating where investments overlap and streamlining processes. In other cases, that means pausing development and re-deploying resources to higher priority areas. Making the company more efficient is up to all of us — we'll be creating more ways for you all to engage and share ideas to help, so stay tuned.*

*Scarcity breeds clarity — this is something we have been saying since the earliest days of Google. It's what drives focus and creativity that ultimately leads to better products that help people all over the world. That's the opportunity in front of us today, and I'm excited for us to rise to the moment again.*  
— Sundar

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 First woman named as WA State Archivist</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/first-woman-named-washington-state-archivist/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/first-woman-named-washington-state-archivist/</a>
GIST	<p>Heather Hirotaka is the first woman to be named Washington State Archivist.</p> <p>“Every day has a story and becomes part of our legacy; how we preserve it matters,” Hirotaka said in <a href="#">a news release</a> announcing her appointment last week. “Washington State Archives works to ensure that our unique and diverse history is captured and accessible for generations to come.”</p> <p>Hirotaka replaces Steve Excell, who retired last December. She was appointed in June and started the position July 5.</p> <p>The Washington State Archives is a division within the Secretary of State’s office that collects and preserves the state’s historical records, and makes them available to the public. The agency has branches in Bellevue, Bellingham, Cheney, Ellensburg and Olympia.</p> <p>In an interview with the <a href="#">Spokesman-Review</a>, Hirotaka said her No. 1 priority in her new role is expanding the public’s access to the State Archives.</p> <p>Her passion for history is fueled by her own life experiences, as well as her husband’s family experience in Japanese incarceration camps during World War II, according to the Spokesman-Review.</p> <p>“Heather’s unique experience and expertise make her the ideal leader to enhance Washington State Archives’ culture of service and further our commitment to preserve and share Washington’s history,” Secretary of State Steve Hobbs said in a statement.</p> <p>Prior to becoming state archivist, Hirotaka was the director of community programs for the Office of Secretary of State, where she oversaw projects like <a href="#">Legacy Washington</a>. Before joining the state in 2017,</p>

	she worked at the Thurston County Auditor's office as a licensing and recording manager, overseeing the public permanent archival record.
	Hirota has a bachelor's degree in law and justice from Central Washington University.
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Biden inserts support for breaching dam</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/white-house-weighs-in-on-lower-snake-river-dam-breaching-in-unusual-power-play/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/white-house-weighs-in-on-lower-snake-river-dam-breaching-in-unusual-power-play/</a>
GIST	<p>The Biden administration released two reports in support of dam removal on the Lower Snake River citing the feasibility of replacing energy produced by the dams and the need for salmon recovery.</p> <p>The reports were made public at 6 a.m. Tuesday and are sure to turn up the volume on the dam removal debate roiling the region. The release by the Council on Environmental Quality on behalf of four agencies inserts the Biden administration more prominently into what has been a largely regional issue.</p> <p>The administration also weighed in on the dam removal debate last March in a <a href="#">blog post</a> signed by multiple top agency officials that — while not taking a position on dam removal — took note of the call by Native tribes for dam removal and of the loss of salmon in the rivers.</p> <p><a href="#">The draft report</a> Rebuilding Interior Columbia Basin Salmon and Steelhead by scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found sweeping changes are needed to restore salmon to fishable levels, from removal of one to four dams on the Lower Snake to reintroduction of salmon to areas entirely blocked by dams.</p> <p>“Business as usual will not restore the health and abundance of Pacific Northwest salmon. We need a durable, inclusive and regionally crafted long-term strategy for the management of the Columbia River Basin,” said CEQ Chair Brenda Mallory, who is coordinating a federal interagency effort, launched in October 2021, to develop information and analyses in support of federal and regional decision-making in the Columbia River System.</p> <p>“These two reports add to the picture — that we are working alongside regional leaders to develop — of what it will take over the decades ahead to restore salmon populations, honor our commitments to Tribal Nations, deliver clean power and meet the many needs of stakeholders across the region.”</p> <p>The report relied in part on science from the Nez Perce Tribe and state of Oregon, in addition to federal research by NOAA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service scientists.</p> <p>GOP members of Congress from around the region blasted the reports.</p> <p>“Today’s release of two reports from the Biden administration’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) confirms what we have suspected for some time — they are cherry picking points to justify breaching the Lower Snake River Dams, which will permanently and negatively impact our way of life in the Pacific Northwest,” the lawmakers stated in a joint news release issued by Representatives Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA-05), Dan Newhouse (WA-03), Jaime Herrera Beutler (WA-03), Cliff Bentz (OR-02), Russ Fulcher (ID-01), and Matt Rosendale (MT-AL).</p> <p>Today, 13 runs of salmon and steelhead are at risk of extinction in the Columbia and Snake rivers as runs have declined to a fraction of historic abundance. Salmon in the Snake Basin are particularly hard-hit with only about 50 fish coming back to some drainages in an area that used to produce half the chinook salmon in the Columbia Basin.</p> <p>The region has spent more than \$24 billion in ratepayer money from 1980-2018 on salmon and steelhead recovery, but the fish continue to decline. It is time for a big step outside the status quo,</p>



according to the report. Dam breaching has long been opposed by grain shippers, irrigators, power producers and other industrial river users.

But recovery isn't happening despite efforts like habitat restoration, massive hatchery releases and passage fixes at the dams.

"We need to go to larger-scale actions," NOAA scientist Chris Jordan said in a briefing on the report Monday.

"We are at a crucial moment for salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River Basin when we're seeing the impacts of climate change on top of other stressors, and this draft report delivers our scientific assessment of what we must do to make progress toward rebuilding the 'healthy and harvestable' fish populations in the Columbia Basin" said Janet Coit, assistant administrator for NOAA Fisheries.

The report on replacement power, commissioned by the U.S. Department of Energy's Bonneville Power Administration and conducted by the private consulting firm E3, put an \$11 billion-\$19 billion price tag on the cost of replacing power from the dams. The range in cost depends on the method and the time frame. The cost estimates are within the range of other similar reports.

"E3's energy analysis confirms what several other studies have shown: We can develop a portfolio of clean energy resources that replaces the output of the dams," said Nancy Hirsh, Executive Director of the NW Energy Coalition. "The big difference among the studies is primarily about how to optimize the replacement portfolio to meet the common goals for reliability and affordability, not about actual feasibility."

The administration has not endorsed the actions in the reports, but it is "carefully considering this information and ongoing regional efforts as it assesses long-term pathways for the Columbia River Basin," the news release on the reports stated.

Some in the region heralded the reports.

"The information that is being developed confirms much of what we have been saying for a long time," said Joseph Bogaard, executive director of the Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition. "The dams are replaceable. We need a political solution. Salmon are in deep trouble and we need to move quickly."

After more than two decades of court battles and debates over the Lower Snake River dams, the reports add to momentum for removal, Bogaard said, even though the Biden administration has yet to take a position.

"The conversation has significantly advanced, accelerated and diversified," Bogaard said.

Kurt Miller, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners, which represents utilities, shippers and other industrial river users, was skeptical of the findings. With chinook salmon in decline throughout the West Coast region — including on some undammed rivers — he disagreed dams were the main issue in recovery. Reducing the amount of hydropower generation also could lead to greater reliance on fossil fuel and stoke global warming that is a grave risk to salmon, Miller said.

"This feels more politically motivated than scientific," Miller said. "Unfortunately, we have no confidence in this latest report from NOAA Fisheries."

He added that it contradicts other peer-reviewed work NOAA has published and relies on scientific input from groups that have been engaged in efforts to remove the dams for years.

GOP Congressman Mike Simpson of Idaho kicked the dam removal bees' nest in 2021, by putting a \$34 billion price on removal and replacement of the dams' services in order to save salmon. Now U.S.

Sen. Patty Murray, a Democrat, and Washington Gov. Jay Inslee also are taking stock of comments on another report on dam removal, with their recommendation expected later this summer.

The reports come as tribes and their allies are heading to Washington, D.C. to advocate for dam removal on the Lower Snake to boost recovery of salmon and endangered southern resident orcas, which rely on salmon for their diet.

So do tribes, who are suffering ill health because of the loss of their traditional foods, including salmon, said Andrew Joseph Jr., chair of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, where salmon passage is blocked by the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams.

"Our bodies were made for eating that salmon," Joseph said. "For thousands of years, it was 80% of our diet. Now our immune system is weaker, and we have the worst health disparities."

His family today has to travel two hours each way to try to catch salmon below Chief Joseph Dam.

The Nez Perce Tribe has long been at the forefront of the push for dam removal on the Lower Snake. Tribal Vice Chair Shannon Wheeler called the reports "definitely encouraging."

"This administration is taking the climate crisis and the salmon extinction crisis seriously," Wheeler said.

The report will be circulated to state and fish managers for review over the next 30 days.

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HEADLINE	07/12 Report: WA gas sales drop 5% in 2022
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/traffic/gas-prices/washington-buying-less-gas-alternate-transportation-options/281-35a52150-225d-4f39-aace-4238baf15074">https://www.king5.com/article/traffic/gas-prices/washington-buying-less-gas-alternate-transportation-options/281-35a52150-225d-4f39-aace-4238baf15074</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A new report from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows people are buying less gas in 2022.</p> <p>Washington is seeing five percent drop in sales, which is almost 500,000 gallons of gas a day, according to an analyst with QuoteWizard. QuoteWizard is the Seattle-based company that compiled the data.</p> <p>For Christopher Aguilar, it was a calculated decision to press pause at the pump.</p> <p>"It's kind of hard right now," Aguilar said. "I feel like nowadays more people are taking public transportation because they realize prices are getting higher."</p> <p>Aguilar now rides the bus every day for work,</p> <p>"Even traveling, going out, I can't spend all that money on gas," he added.</p> <p>Gas sales are now trending down in 2022 according to analyst Nick VinZant with QuoteWizard.</p> <p>"We haven't seen fuel usage this low since 1995. So we've gone back 25 years in terms of how much gas we're using," said VinZant.</p> <p>VinZant said it comes down to three contributing factors: more people are working from home, the high gas prices and an increased acceptance of alternative vehicles.</p> <p>"People are using less gas because it's more expensive and they're making that switch to alternative fuel vehicles and those aren't trends that will change," said VinZant.</p>

	<p>According to King County Metro, daily ridership has increased more than 36,000 riders from January to June of this year.</p> <p>"I might invest in other forms of travel, I might walk more, maybe get a bike or scooter," said Aguilar.</p> <p>"The number of employees riding and some of them from far away like Renton has definitely increased and that's directly correlated to the cost of 6-dollar gas," said Gary Tegantvoort., the co-owner of Montlake Bicycle Shop.</p> <p>With the nice weather and high gas prices, Tegantvoort said it's an easy decision.</p> <p>"I think there's a big push in the city to find alternate means than driving a car," Tegantvoort said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/12 'High risk' Covid counties cut in half</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/number-high-risk-covid-counties-washington-cut-half-over-last-week/K7IMDKYSHZHEXLKRKX7Y6A5MFY/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/number-high-risk-covid-counties-washington-cut-half-over-last-week/K7IMDKYSHZHEXLKRKX7Y6A5MFY/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>WASHINGTON STATE — Less than two weeks ago, nearly half of Washington's 39 counties were reporting high <a href="#">COVID-19 Community Levels</a>.</p> <p>On July 5, 15 counties were listed as high. As of Tuesday, that number had dropped to seven, with most of the state's counties now at the medium level, <a href="#">according to the CDC</a>.</p> <p>The counties that had been listed as high but have now dropped to medium are Chelan, Clallam, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Lewis, Lincoln, Pacific and Pierce.</p> <p>Grant, Grays Harbor, Thurston, Spokane and Walla Walla counties continue to be at high levels. New on the "high" list of counties since July 5 are Adams and Clark counties.</p> <p>People in counties with high transmission of the virus are advised to take precautions such as wearing masks indoors when in public and on public transportation.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/12 Officials monitoring wildfire conditions</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/local-officials-monitoring-conditions-wildfires-burn-along-west-coast/6YL4URSHJFDBXKLTCISZ7JZ74/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/local-officials-monitoring-conditions-wildfires-burn-along-west-coast/6YL4URSHJFDBXKLTCISZ7JZ74/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>SEATTLE — Some wildfires causing problems along the West Coast are also happening amid extreme heat.</p> <p>People across the country are watching firefighters in California working desperately to save ancient giant sequoias in Yosemite National Park.</p> <p>The Washburn Fire grew on Monday and has burned across 3.5 square miles.</p> <p>Officials are watching the conditions in Washington as well.</p> <p>KIRO 7 spoke with Russ Lane, wildfire division manager for the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.</p> <p>Lane said Washington could have fires like the one in California, but also said that the wildfire season is about a month late due to our wet weather.</p> <p>As things continue to dry out around the state, the potential for fire increases. So far this year, there have been 181 fires that have burned 179 acres.</p>

	<p>“That actually is a 10-year low on ignitions and also a 10-year low on acres burned, so we’ve done really well to this point. We want the public to remain vigilant on activities out in the wildlands,” said Lane.</p> <p>Meanwhile in Utah, record-breaking heat combined with high winds have fueled wildfires.</p> <p>The heat is also a major concern, and not just because of fires. In Texas, record-high temperatures prompted the state’s power grid operator to conserve energy to prevent blackouts.</p> <p>Lane said though it’s only a matter of time before we see some fires, he doesn’t expect it be like 2021 with some large, sustained fires. He does expect to see some large fires here. It all depends on conditions and human activity going forward.</p> <p>The National Interagency Fire Center said so far, 2022 has been above average in terms for the number of wildfires and the size of damage.</p> <p>The agency says 35,000 wildfires have burned more than 7,000 square miles.</p> <p>Currently, 79 large fires have burned nearly 3 million acres in the U.S.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Open trapping season Asian giant hornet</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/its-open-trapping-season-on-the-asian-giant-hornet-washington-state-bellingham-seattle-murder-hornet">https://komonews.com/news/local/its-open-trapping-season-on-the-asian-giant-hornet-washington-state-bellingham-seattle-murder-hornet</a>
GIST	<p>Hibernation time for the Asian Giant Hornet is now over.</p> <p>The Washington Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is kicking off a new, open season for trapping and tracking the hornet, training entomologists on trapping the hornet up in Whatcom County. The season typically opens in July and runs through November.</p> <p>“The faster we find them the faster we can remove a nest and if we get to a nest early enough, nothing from that nest will be able to reproduce and move forward,” said Cassie Cichorz, an outreach coordinator for the WSDA.</p> <p>The state removed three nests of Asian Giant Hornets last year before reproduction started and then didn’t find any more hornets the rest of the season. So, what are they expecting to find this year?</p> <p>“You always have to remember, no news is good news, right? No news can be good news; we would love to not find any hornets and not find any nests,” she said.</p> <p>Cichorz tells me the WSDA is now gearing up for a new season, testing protective suits and equipment, to start trapping and tracking the Asian Giant Hornet, found primarily in Northwest Whatcom County.</p> <p>“One was found in Bellingham last year,” Cichorz said. “We did have one hornet found in Marysville however that was unrelated to the other introduction and no other hornets were found following that.”</p> <p>The state’s working to track any and all of these giant hornets, because they are a threat.</p> <p>“They’re really good predators of the honeybee so that really threatens all of our apiaries, backyard honeybees, as well as the whole industry that comes off of honeybees,” said Cichorz. “If they’re eating our honeybees, our agriculture is affected.”</p> <p>This is why the work continues to trap and track every giant hornet they can. And it’s not just entomologists who can do it. Anyone can get involved, becoming a citizen scientist.</p>

	<p>To make a trap to hang near your house, Cichorz says you start with a clear plastic juice bottle.</p> <p>“Then create an H shape in the bottle and then cut that shape out with a box cutter and it will create tabs. Then you can push one tab in and pull one tab out. Essentially this creates a landing for an Asian giant hornet,” Cichorz explained.</p> <p>Inside the juice bottle, the state uses a bait of equal parts rice cooking wine and orange juice, but you can also mix equal parts of brown sugar and water.</p> <p>“A breeze goes by it takes that scent of the bait and draws it out to the air so far hornet is flying nearby it goes I want to get in get on that little landing pad enters the bottle and essentially it’s pretty trapped in there,” Cichorz said.</p> <p>The next step is checking the trap every week, emptying it and baiting it again.</p> <p>“We actually in the first year, in 2020, we required all residents as well as all of our trappings to return back all the insects collected to see if we were harming native beneficial pollinators. Another cool thing about this rice cooking wine is there is certain alcohol content and it really did detour these (beneficial pollinators) from going in the traps,” said Cichorz.</p> <p>There’s one more thing people can do to help WSDA. Cichorz calls it, “see it, snap it, send it.” See something that looks like a giant hornet? Snap a picture of it and send it to the WSDA.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Employees don’t buy Starbucks excuse</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/starbucks-employees-say-they-dont-buy-safety-issues-excuse-for-store-shut-downs">https://komonews.com/news/local/starbucks-employees-say-they-dont-buy-safety-issues-excuse-for-store-shut-downs</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Starbucks employees at several stores set to close by July 31 are concerned about their future and questioning the company’s reasoning behind the closures.</p> <p>The company is closing six stores in Seattle and Everett because of crime and safety concerns. KOMO looked up property crimes and violent crimes on the blocks where these affected stores are located and did not see a noticeable upward trend at most of the locations. Still, the company says not all of the issues employees are seeing get reported.</p> <p>“I 100 percent cannot buy the safety issues as the excuse,” Mari Cosgrove, a Starbucks barista and union member, said.</p> <p>Cosgrove found out the Starbucks location at Union Station where she’s worked for the past four years was closing during a mandatory store meeting Monday afternoon.</p> <p>“I was honestly insulted they would say this about worker concerns,” Cosgrove said, “[To] have workers say, ‘No we’re not concerned actually’ and then be told, ‘No you are concerned that’s why we’re closing, end of discussion.’”</p> <p>According to the city’s reported crime numbers KOMO obtained, most of the other affected locations are not seeing a noticeable upward crime trend, except for the Westlake Center location at 4th &amp; Pine. Property crimes on that block shot up to 134 so far this year compared to 39 last year.</p> <p>But near the Roosevelt location closing business owners say they have been dealing with several safety issues and crime.</p> <p>“They literally took a pretty solid stick, broke this window and just walked through it,” Matthew Humphrey, owner of Steele Barber, said.</p>

	<p>Humphrey has had two break-ins so far at his shop. He shared surveillance video of thieves coming in last November, and he's concerned with what the Starbucks closure means for the neighborhood still trying to recover from the pandemic.</p> <p>"You've got to take action now, it's getting worse, not better," Humphrey said, "Starbucks is pulling out, it's a bad sign."</p> <p>Starbucks could not provide the number of employee safety reports it got at each location, but a spokesperson noted some of the issues might go unreported, including mental health issues and substance abuse.</p> <p>Starbucks union members brought up concerns the closures are linked to union organizing. At least two of the six stores closing are unionized.</p> <p>The company told KOMO any claims of union-busting are false, saying the 16 stores closing nationwide include union and non-union stores.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 White House warns: Covid is not over</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/us/politics/ba5-omicron-variant-white-house.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/us/politics/ba5-omicron-variant-white-house.html</a>
GIST	<p>President Biden's coronavirus response team warned Americans on Tuesday that they must do more to protect themselves against Covid-19, <a href="#">as the highly transmissible BA.5 subvariant of the coronavirus</a> fuels a new wave of infections, re-infections and hospitalizations across the country.</p> <p>BA.5, an offshoot of the Omicron variant, <a href="#">is now dominant among new U.S. cases</a>. The White House has been watching it <a href="#">march across Europe</a> and <a href="#">South Africa</a>, and on Tuesday, the response team outlined its strategy to combat the subvariant, which appears to be able to evade vaccines, as well as immune system defenses built up through prior infection.</p> <p>"The key feature of BA.5, that we know about, is its immune evasiveness — you can be fully vaccinated and boosted and still have a risk of a breakthrough infection," Dr. Ashish K. Jha, Mr. Biden's coronavirus response coordinator, said in an interview Monday. "You can be previously infected — even as recent as the last couple of months — and have a very high rate of reinfection."</p> <p>At the briefing on Tuesday, Dr. Jha said the administration has been planning for just such a moment, and told Americans they can take steps to protect themselves by getting vaccinated or boosted; testing if they feel sick; seeking out therapeutics if they test positive and wearing masks in crowded places to minimize the spread of the virus.</p> <p>"We can prevent serious illness," he said. "We can keep people out of the hospital and especially out of the ICU. We can save lives and we can minimize the disruptions caused by Covid-19. And even in the face of BA5, the tools we have continue to work."</p> <p>As part of the strategy to combat BA.5, federal officials are considering <a href="#">expanding eligibility for second coronavirus booster shots</a> to adults under 50, according to several people familiar with the thinking. Beyond that, the plans do not sound very different than those to combat previous Omicron subvariants.</p> <p><a href="#">A White House fact sheet said</a> the administration would continue to advise Americans, particularly those age 50 and older and those who are vulnerable, to get booster shots; to test if they show symptoms; and to seek out therapies, including Paxlovid, which has been shown to reduce the risk of hospitalization and death, if they get sick.</p> <p>"Variants will continue to emerge if the virus circulates globally and in this country," Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, Mr. Biden's chief medical adviser for the pandemic, said at the briefing. "We should not let it disrupt our lives. But we cannot deny that it is a reality that we need to deal with."</p>



As Americans have turned their attention away from the pandemic, mask mandates have dropped and people are going about their daily lives, often regarding Covid as more of a nuisance than a threat. But experts warn that the pandemic is far from over, even if it has receded from Americans' daily consciousness.

The daily number of reported cases in the United States has remained steady at roughly 100,000 — a figure that many experts say is underreported because so many people are testing at home. But hospitalizations have risen 18 percent over the past two weeks, [according to a New York Times database](#).

Dr. Jha said that figure could reflect those who are hospitalized for medical issues other than Covid, but who test positive. But some other experts have said that the increase in hospitalizations indicates that a BA.5 surge is already underway.

“We’re in a surge,” said Dr. Eric Topol, a cardiologist and director of the Scripps Research Translational Institute. Referring to the early days of the first Omicron surge, he added: “It won’t be as bad as what we went through in January. But it isn’t good. And we basically have let down our guard.”

In a recent [post on Substack](#), Dr. Topol called BA.5 “the worst version of the virus that we’ve seen.”

Currently, a national average of about 330 coronavirus deaths are reported each day, according to The Times’s database, down from more than 2,600 a day at the height of the Omicron surge. But if the 330 average remained steady over a year, it would amount to more than 120,000 deaths — a figure Dr. Jha called “unacceptable.” By comparison, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates influenza](#) claimed 12,000 to 52,000 lives in the United States annually from 2010 to 2020.

Since April, when Dr. Jha replaced Jeffrey D. Zients as the coronavirus response coordinator, the White House’s Covid briefings have been fewer and farther between. The [last briefing](#) was nearly three weeks ago. In addition to Dr. Fauci, who last month was recovering from his [own bout with Covid](#), Dr. Jha was joined Tuesday by Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, the C.D.C. director.

Looking ahead, Dr. Jha said that getting a booster dose now would not preclude people from getting another booster, reformulated to combat Omicron and its subvariants, in the fall. Last month, an [expert committee recommended](#) that the Food and Drug Administration move to update booster shots to target different forms of Omicron.

But those doses may not become available until October, Dr. Jha said. And even then, the administration may not have enough booster shots for every American who wants one, because [Congress has refused](#) to allocate any additional pandemic aid. In the event of a shortage, he said, the administration would prioritize older Americans and those with specific vulnerabilities.

“My hope is that is not a decision that we need to make,” Dr. Jha said. “But it will get harder and harder to have vaccines in time, the longer Congress waits.”

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HEADLINE	07/12 Dangerous heatwaves: China, US, Europe
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/12/dangerous-heatwaves-engulf-parts-china-us-europe">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/12/dangerous-heatwaves-engulf-parts-china-us-europe</a>
GIST	<p>Dangerous heatwaves are engulfing parts of China, <a href="#">Europe</a>, south-west and central US this week, as dozens of cities have found themselves dealing with soaring summer temperatures.</p> <p>By Tuesday afternoon, at least 86 Chinese cities in eastern and southern parts of the country had issued heat alerts. Chinese meteorologists forecast temperatures in some cities would top 40C (104F) in the next 24 hours.</p>

In Shanghai, China's most populous city, the authorities have told its 25 million people to prepare for unusually hot weather. Since record-keeping began in 1873, Shanghai has had only 15 days with temperatures above 40C.

"This is too hot for July," said Wang Ying, 35, who lives in Shanghai. "My air conditioning has been on the whole day today, and I don't dare to venture out at all – even to my balcony." She said she planned to work from home for the week.

Heatwave-related mortality has risen by a factor of four from 1990 to 2019, reaching 26,800 deaths in 2019, according to [a Lancet study](#) published in 2020. People aged 65 years or above face a 10.4% higher risk of dying during a heatwave, the study said. As a result, a number of Chinese cities are warning of the danger of such high temperatures to elderly people.

In the eastern city of Nanjing, one of China's three "furnaces" notorious for their searing summers, city officials have opened up underground air-raid shelters to local people since Sunday, with its wartime bunkers equipped with wifi, books, water dispensers and even microwave ovens.

In Chongqing, another furnace city, the roof of one of its museums melted, with the tiles of a traditional Chinese roof popping as the heat dissolved the underlying tar. The city raised a red alert on Monday. High temperatures, humidity and ultraviolet radiation are also forecast to envelop the central city of Wuhan, the third furnace city.

In the US, south-west and central areas have been experiencing extreme heat, with 42.2C in Waco among more than a dozen daily temperature records broken at the weekend in cities in Texas, Colorado, Oklahoma and Arkansas.

A "heat dome", an area of heat-trapping high pressure, has been blamed for the spike in what was already a hot summer. Texans sweltering under record temperatures and high humidity have been [urged to conserve energy](#) as the power grid struggles to cope with a rise in demand.

Temperatures in Texas are forecast to dip by the end of the week while rising in Arizona, reaching 45C in the state capital, Phoenix, on Friday.

In Europe, [Spain](#) is in the grip of its second heatwave of the summer, with temperatures in some southern and south-western parts set to reach or exceed 44C this week.

Rubén del Campo, a spokesperson for the state meteorological office, Aemet, said the heatwave, which began last Saturday, was expected to peak between Tuesday and Thursday but could stretch into the coming weekend.

"This will be an intense heatwave, and temperatures on the hottest days could reach or even exceed 44C in the Guadiana and Guadalquivir valleys and in cities such as Córdoba or Badajoz," said Del Campo, adding that the Ebro valley and southern parts of the north-western region of Galicia could have temperatures of 42C.

As well as bringing a "very high risk of forest fires", he said, the heatwave meant night-time temperatures in many places would be uncomfortably high.

"There will be torrid, tropical nights in some central, western and southern parts of Spain, when the temperature does not fall below 25C," he said. "That means that at the time when most people usually go to bed – between 10pm and midnight – temperatures in some places could still be between 32C and 34C."

Del Campo said that while the heatwave was not on course to match the 26-day one recorded in June and July 2015, nor the 16-day one of late July and early August 2003, it could rival previous hot spells for third place.

Although the first official heatwave of the Spanish summer, in mid-June, [brought temperatures of up to 42C](#), parts of Spain had experienced soaring temperatures the previous month after [the hottest May on record](#) pushed the mercury past 40C in some areas.

Spain recorded its highest ever temperature last August, [47.4C in the Andalucían town of Montoro](#).

Across the border in [Portugal](#), temperatures topped 44C last weekend, fuelling wildfires, with vast smoke clouds visible in the capital, Lisbon. Firefighters brought the largest blaze under control on Monday after it burned through swathes of the central municipality of Ourém, local officials said.

While temperatures eased somewhat in Portugal on Monday, they were expected to soar again in the coming days, with 44C forecast for the south-eastern city of Evora.

“In the coming days we will experience conditions of maximum risk,” the prime minister, António Costa, said. “The slightest lapse in vigilance could result in a fire of significant proportions.”

A front of hot air began pushing into [France](#) on Monday, with the temperature above 30C across much of the country, according to the national weather forecaster, Météo-France.

It said temperatures on Tuesday could hit 39C in some parts of France, adding that the heatwave was expected to peak between Saturday and next Tuesday.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 US emissions damage other countries</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jul/12/us-carbon-emissions-greenhouse-gases-climate-crisis">https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jul/12/us-carbon-emissions-greenhouse-gases-climate-crisis</a>
GIST	<p>The US has inflicted more than \$1.9tn in damage to other countries from the effects of its greenhouse gas emissions, according to a new analysis that has provided the first measurement of nations’ liability in stoking the climate crisis.</p> <p>The huge volume of planet-heating gases pumped out by the US, the largest historical emitter, has caused such harm to other, mostly poor, countries through heatwaves, crop failures and other consequences that the US is responsible for \$1.91tn in lost global income since 1990, the study found.</p> <p>This puts the US ahead of China, currently the world’s leading emitter, Russian, India and Brazil as the next largest contributors to global economic damage through their emissions. Combined, these five leading culprits have caused a total of \$6tn in losses worldwide, or about 11% of annual global GDP, since 1990 by fueling climate breakdown.</p> <p>“It’s a huge number,” said Chris Callahan, a researcher at Dartmouth College and lead author of the study, of the overall economic loss. “It’s not surprising that the US and China are at the top of that list but the numbers really are very stark. For the first time, we can show that a country’s emissions can be traced to specific harm.”</p> <p>The Dartmouth researchers combined a number of different models, showing factors such as emissions, local climate conditions and economic changes, to ascertain the precise impact of an individual country’s contribution to the climate crisis. They looked for these links over a period spanning 1990 to 2014, with the research published in the journal Climatic Change.</p> <p>What they found was a perniciously uneven picture – rich nations in northerly latitudes, such as those in north America and Europe, have done the most to fuel climate change but have not yet been severely harmed by it economically. Countries such as Canada and Russia have even benefitted from longer agricultural growing seasons and reduced deaths from the cold as winters have warmed.</p> <p>Conversely, poorer countries, such as those found in the tropics or low-lying Pacific islands, have done the least to harm other nations and yet are suffering the brunt of the economic damage from climate change.</p>

The research didn't factor things not included in GDP, such as biodiversity loss, cultural harm and deaths from disasters, meaning the damage is in reality far greater.

"In places that are already hot you are seeing it becoming harder to work outside, mortality from the heat is on the rise, it's harder to grow crops," said Justin Mankin, a geographer at Dartmouth and co-author of the paper. "If you layer that on top of which countries have emitted the most you get an almost perfect storm."

"There is this huge inequity. Countries like the US have disproportionately damaged low-income countries in the global south and disproportionately benefited cooler, higher income countries in the global north."

Developing countries and climate activists have pushed for "loss and damage" payments to be made to those who are suffering the most from global heating through heatwaves, floods and drought. But the US, which is responsible for around a quarter of all emissions to date, has resisted setting up such a fund, citing fears that it would be held legally liable for the damages caused by its voracious appetite for fossil fuels such as oil, coal and gas.

The pressure to alter this stance is ramping up again ahead of UN climate talks to be held in Egypt later this year, with an alliance of young activists from more than 40 countries [recently writing](#) to the talks' president to urge action on the loss and damage issue.

The climate crisis has "escalated humanitarian crises disproportionately affecting the poor countries in the global south", the letter states, noting that the [UN estimates that as many as 3.6 billion people](#) around the world now live in areas that are highly vulnerable to climate disasters.

"For far too long, efforts to reduce emissions and scale up adaptation have been utterly inadequate exceeding people's ability to adapt. Therefore, loss and damage is now part of the reality of climate change and must be addressed."

Progress, however, has been fraught. Wealthy countries have dawdled on a promise to provide \$100bn in climate aid to vulnerable countries and any legal avenue to extract damages from the US or China is complicated by the fact neither country recognizes the jurisdiction of the international court of justice in the Hague.

"The chief impediment to claims by one country against another for climate damages isn't their scientific basis, it's their legal basis," said Michael Gerrard, director of the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia Law School. "Countries enjoy sovereign immunity against most kinds of lawsuits unless they have waived it."

This impasse means some sort of negotiated deal remains the most likely way that the inequity of climate impacts is ameliorated. "It's a positive step that this study is beginning to quantify the harms these national actors, we can see the scale of harm is enormous," said Carroll Muffett, chief executive of the Center for International Environmental Law.

"We are moving slowly towards some sort of accountability for this. As the evidence mounts and the record of US obstructionism in the climate context is established, I don't think it and other countries will be able to escape their liability in perpetuity," Muffett added.

"The costs of climate damages are mounting and ultimately someone will have to pay that cost. The question is who will that be and how it will be done."

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HEADLINE	07/12 Switzerland emerges as sanctions weak link
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/switzerland-playground-of-russian-oligarchs-emerges-as-weak-link-on-sanctions-putin-ukraine-war-11657624783?mod=hp_lead_pos6">https://www.wsj.com/articles/switzerland-playground-of-russian-oligarchs-emerges-as-weak-link-on-sanctions-putin-ukraine-war-11657624783?mod=hp_lead_pos6</a>

ZUG, Switzerland—After Switzerland said in February [it was joining European Union sanctions against Russian oligarchs](#), this quiet Alpine getaway seemed like an obvious place to hunt for targets.

The streets are clustered with the offices of companies founded by Russia's wealthiest men, along with the headquarters for landmark natural-gas pipelines Nord Stream 1 and 2 and the energy-trading department of Gazprom PJSC.

So many Russian billionaires have homes or businesses here that the local opposition party had begun taking sightseers on an Oligarch's Tour. Swiss newspapers nicknamed Zug "Little Moscow" and joked that local leaders wanted to build a Kremlin wall around the town.

It didn't seem so easy to the six local officials charged with helping implement sanctions. Working from a fifth-floor conference room, the team had a hard time identifying homes or local businesses officially owned by any of the hundreds of Russian oligarchs on the Swiss government's list of sanctioned people. They struggled with Cyrillic names and often couldn't make sense of the 300-page list, said Heinz Tännler, the financial director for the Canton, or state, of Zug.

They also struggled with the implications for the local economy, added Mr. Tännler, who worries that sanctions have jeopardized his canton's reputation as a safe place for foreign investment. "This is a very difficult time, especially for the Canton of Zug," he said.

In the end, the officials found exactly one company out of the roughly 30,000 registered in Zug that they believed was owned or controlled by a sanctioned individual.

Zug's slow start is emblematic of the country as a whole. Switzerland has pledged to punish Russia for [its invasion of Ukraine](#). So far, that promise hasn't triggered much action against Russian companies doing business there, bolstering concerns in world capitals that the Alpine financial hub isn't doing enough to forestall the Kremlin and [Russian President Vladimir Putin's allies](#).

Eighty percent of Russia's commodities are traded through Switzerland, mostly through Zug and the lakeside city of Geneva. Swiss banks manage an estimated \$150 billion for Russian clients, according to the country's banking association. Thirty-two of the oligarchs closest to Mr. Putin have property, bank accounts or businesses in Switzerland, according to by Zurich-based transparency group Public Eye.

In the four months since Swiss authorities began sanctions, \$6.8 billion in Russian financial assets have been frozen, alongside 15 homes and properties, according to the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, or [SECO](#), the implementing entity.

By contrast, EU countries have collectively frozen \$14 billion in alleged oligarch assets spanning funds, boats, helicopters and real estate, in addition to over \$20 billion in Russian central-bank reserves. EU countries have also blocked around \$200 billion in financial transactions.

Authorities on the U.K. island of Jersey alone [froze over \\$7 billion in assets they said are linked to oligarch Roman Abramovich](#), who didn't respond to requests for comment.

U.S. senators have privately petitioned Swiss officials to do more to locate Russian money and property. "Instead of enabling Russia's abuse of the global financial system, they should stand against it," said Sen. Roger Wicker, chair of the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation, which promotes human rights, military security and economic cooperation.

Switzerland's government has rejected that kind of criticism, stressing that its adoption of EU sanctions marks a historic shift and that it is doing everything possible to hunt down blacklisted assets.

"It is clear that the sheer volume of the sanctions against Russia and Belarus, as well as the speed with which they were adopted, creates certain challenges for implementing authorities, in Switzerland and elsewhere," said a SECO spokeswoman.



Western sanctions have increasingly been used to squeeze Russia since 2014, when [it annexed Crimea](#). Since then, Mr. Putin and a tight circle of allies have been exploiting gaps in the global financial system to evade blacklists and hide wealth overseas.

Despite Switzerland's status as a global financial hub, the country's regulators are hamstrung by limited resources—SECO had just 10 officials fully dedicated to sanctions until recently, when the government hired five more. Their work is also frustrated by an old structural problem: The business of registering companies remains a hive of secrecy, making it difficult to identify ultimate ownership of assets, according to Western diplomats.

Swiss bankers and transparency campaigners say billions of dollars of Russian clients' assets have been transferred to the names of spouses and children in recent years—a phenomenon that accelerated in the run-up to the war, they say.

### **The Gateway**

The Putin regime's presence in Zug can be traced to the early days of his presidency, and a ceremony in the canton's sprawling art nouveau palace, Theatre Casino.

While Russia's military was bombing the restive republic of Chechnya, Mr. Putin was awarded the 2002 "Zug Peace Prize" by the Nuclear Disarmament Forum, an organization of influential local businessmen that has since disbanded. The meeting, attended by business and political leaders close to the Kremlin and serenaded by the Russian National Orchestra, heralded the flourishing of Russian commodity trading in the town, according to local politicians.

Many oligarchs have businesses in Zug that remain untouched by sanctions. They include Mr. Abramovich, the largest shareholder of Evraz PLC, a Russian steelmaker and mining company that has a trading arm in the canton. Evraz was sanctioned in the U.K., where it traded on the [London Stock Exchange](#), but hasn't been sanctioned in Switzerland or the EU, even though Mr. Abramovich has.

Not far from Zug, in Winterthur, is the headquarters of [Sulzer](#) AG, an engineering company that is 48.8% owned by Russian billionaire Viktor Vekselberg, who is sanctioned by the U.S. and the U.K. When Poland sanctioned Sulzer's operations, the Swiss embassy in Warsaw unsuccessfully lobbied the Polish government to reverse the move, according to a Polish government official and the Swiss department of foreign affairs.

Sulzer said Poland's decision was wrong given that Mr. Vekselberg is just a minority shareholder and neither owns nor controls the company. Sulzer isn't sanctioned anywhere else, a spokesman said. Representatives for Mr. Abramovich and [Evraz](#) didn't reply to requests for comment.

The SECO spokeswoman said the agency is in close contact with the U.K. authorities about sanctions, but "is not bound by their assessment." A spokesman for the department of foreign affairs said that under Swiss law the government can assist Swiss companies abroad, and that sanctioning Sulzer's Polish subsidiaries threatened jobs and hurt Sulzer clients.

U.S. and European officials say they are counting on the Swiss government to find which companies and homes in Switzerland belong to sanctioned Russian oligarchs and freeze them. Switzerland's history of financial secrecy, enshrined in its law, can make it exceedingly difficult to identify who owns what.

Under Swiss legal precedent, lawyers can still open a company on behalf of a client and claim attorney-client privilege to block authorities from uncovering that person's identity. That, officials say, hinders them from finding more companies whose accounts should be frozen under sanctions. It is also an obstacle for banks with small compliance teams.

Swiss business registries don't require firms to list true owners, which are often hidden by opaque companies in Switzerland held by trusts in financial havens, a loophole exploited by businessmen from



Russia and elsewhere eager to mask the true ownership of their assets, according to Swiss opposition politicians and advocates for financial reform.

“A Swiss lawyer hides the name of the beneficial owner in his vault, and there’s no way the Swiss authorities can get to the name,” said Mark Pieth, a former head of the Organization for Economic Development’s bribery division now at the Basel Institute on Governance. “The government has deliberately tied its own hands behind its back.”

### **EuroChem**

Trusts came into play earlier this year when Switzerland, following the EU’s lead, sanctioned Andrey Melnichenko, one of Russia’s richest oligarchs and a longtime Swiss resident.

On March 9, the EU added Mr. Melnichenko’s name—No. 721—to its blacklist, describing him as part of the “closest circle of Vladimir Putin ” and involved in businesses vital to the government. It mentioned a meeting he attended in Moscow with Mr. Putin in the first hours of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, along with 35 other oligarchs. In Italy, police seized his sailing yacht, the world’s largest.

Left untouched was EuroChem AG, a company founded by Mr. Melnichenko in 2001 that grew into one of the world’s top producers of fertilizer, with revenue last year of \$10.2 billion. Based in a small glass tower in Zug nicknamed the Dallas Building, the company is deeply entwined in the supply chains of Europe’s largest chemical giants.

The day before the sanctions were announced, the tycoon disclaimed his interest in a Cyprus trust that held the company, according to a document signed by EuroChem’s chief financial officer. That left Mr. Melnichenko’s wife, Aleksandra, a former Serbian pop star, as the trust’s sole beneficiary.

“Given that Mr. Melnichenko no longer owns, holds or controls any funds and economic resources of EuroChem Group...neither EuroChem Group nor any member of EuroChem Group are subject to EU asset freeze measures,” stated a document viewed by The Wall Street Journal. EuroChem lawyers also wrote to SECO that the company wouldn’t provide economic resources to Mr. Melnichenko or pay dividends to his wife.

On March 28, SECO rendered its judgment: EuroChem didn’t need to have its assets or bank accounts frozen. Officials in Zug followed suit.

Mr. Tännler, the Canton’s financial director, bridled at criticism that local officials aren’t looking hard enough. “I think people know that we did a good job, that we did what we can do,” he said. He washed his hands of the EuroChem decision. “SECO made a determination that EuroChem is clean,” Mr. Tännler said.

The European Commission in June countered that decision, ruling that Ms. Melnichenko was unduly benefitting from her husband and should be sanctioned. Switzerland then followed suit, blacklisting her but leaving EuroChem untouched.

[Credit Suisse](#), which needs to answer to tougher U.S. regulators because of its U.S. dollar business, has frozen the accounts EuroChem held at the bank.

A spokesman for the couple said Mr. Melnichenko considers the sanctions against him unjust. “The formal justifications are nonsense” said the spokesman, who denied that Mr. Melnichenko is a member of Mr. Putin’s inner circle or provides substantial revenue to the Russian government.

Ms. Melnichenko has appealed to the Council of the European Union, saying the sanctions against her have complicated EuroChem’s ability to sell fertilizer, “leading to the famine and death of millions of people.”

HEADLINE	07/12 Pandemic fueled surge superbug infections
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/07/12/superbug-infection-antibiotic-resistance-pandemic/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/07/12/superbug-infection-antibiotic-resistance-pandemic/</a>
GIST	<p>The coronavirus pandemic caused a surge in superbug infections and deaths in U.S. hospitals, reversing years of progress fighting one of the <a href="#">gravest public health challenges</a> in modern medicine, according to a <a href="#">new analysis</a> released Tuesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>In 2020, the first year of the pandemic, infections and deaths among several serious pathogens increased about 15 percent overall from 2019, the report said. Infections of one especially dangerous drug-resistant bacteria that causes bloodstream and urinary tract infections skyrocketed 78 percent in one year.</p> <p>The report analyzed antimicrobial resistance in the United States, focusing specifically on superbug infections that started in hospitals.</p> <p>Public health efforts had driven down these resistant infections in hospitals by nearly 30 percent between 2012 and 2017. But in 2020, the pandemic pushed hospitals, health departments and communities “near their breaking points,” CDC Director Rochelle Walensky wrote in the report.</p> <p>Sicker patients overwhelmed hospitals. They needed more frequent and longer use of medical devices, such as catheters and ventilators. Devices that break the body’s natural protective barrier — the skin — increase infection risk.</p> <p>Clinicians unfamiliar with the new covid-19 disease relied heavily on antibiotics as the first option to treat patients with fever and shortness of breath — symptoms of the viral illness. From March 2020 to October 2020, almost 80 percent of patients hospitalized with covid-19 received an antibiotic, the report said. Those lifesaving drugs work against bacteria, not against viruses. High levels of antibiotic prescribing can put patients at risk for side effects and allow drug-resistance to develop and spread.</p> <p>In addition, hospitals faced severe shortages of staff and personal protective equipment, <a href="#">especially the higher-quality N95 masks</a> that offer the best protection. In some places, hospital personnel used parts purchased from Home Depot and craft stores to create protective face shields for workers. Overwhelmed staff had difficulty following infection prevention and control protocols, the report said. Many personnel were pulled away from infection control to help take care of patients with covid-19. That created a kind of double whammy: fewer staff members to prevent infections treating more patients at risk for them.</p> <p>“In addition to having devastating impacts for the millions of people who got covid and the millions of people who died of covid, the covid pandemic had a profound and far-reaching impact on the safety of patients in the United States,” said Arjun Srinivasan, the top CDC official leading the agency’s prevention efforts to control superbugs. “One of the knock-on effects of covid ... is with these antibiotic-resistant infections, infections that are very difficult to treat, in some cases untreatable, with very high rates of mortality.”</p> <p>Some patients recovered from their covid-19 illness, he said, only to face “a horrible outcome”: dying from a drug-resistant infection.</p> <p>In 2020, more than 29,400 people died of antimicrobial-resistant infections commonly associated with health care, the report found. Of these, nearly 40 percent acquired the infection while hospitalized. The remaining infections occurred outside the hospital, including in nursing homes and other community health-care facilities. Because of limited data, the CDC does not know how many people who died of superbug infections also had covid-19.</p> <p>The CDC <a href="#">estimates</a> more than 2.8 million antimicrobial-resistant infections in the United States each year, with more than 35,000 people dying as a result. The total number of deaths in 2020 from these resistant infections may be much higher; surveillance and data reporting were curtailed because of the pandemic.</p>

Antimicrobial resistance occurs because bacteria are constantly evolving to fend off the drugs used to kill them. As they mutate, some bacteria develop the ability to fight off different antibiotics, multiplying and spreading resistance along the way. The more antibiotics are used in health care and [agriculture](#), the less effective they become.

Antibiotic resistance is particularly deadly for patients in hospitals and nursing homes, and those with weak immune systems. But these hard-to-treat infections now threaten people undergoing common modern surgeries and therapies, such as knee replacements, organ transplants and cancer treatments.

Young and otherwise healthy people can get a [methicillin-resistant \*Staphylococcus aureus\*, or MRSA](#), infection on their skin. Women can get a urinary tract infection from another bad bug, ESBL-producing enterobacteriaceae, that can no longer be treated with first-line oral medications and require intravenous antibiotics.

Hospital infections rose in the first year of the pandemic for three of the five resistant bacteria and fungi that pose the greatest threats to human health. The biggest jump was in carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter*, bacteria that cause pneumonia and wound, bloodstream, and urinary tract infections, often among patients in intensive care units. In 2020, hospital infections for carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter* jumped 78 percent, with 7,500 cases and 700 deaths, the report found.

There was also a 60 percent increase in hospital infections of a deadly [superbug yeast](#) called *Candida auris*, and a 35 percent increase in hospital infections of carbapenem-resistant enterobacteriaceae (CRE), also known as [“nightmare bacteria.”](#) CRE are a large group of bacteria of major concern for patients who require catheters and other devices, long courses of some antibiotics or long hospital stays.

The superbugs are resistant to all or nearly all antibiotics, kill up to half of patients who contract bloodstream infections, and can [transfer their antibiotic resistance to other related bacteria](#), potentially making the other bacteria untreatable.

The CDC had previously categorized the toll that [18 pathogens](#) are taking on humans, ranking the threat of each as “urgent,” “serious” or “concerning.” But the agency is missing data for nine of those germs, including many that are spread outside hospital settings. They include sexually transmitted drug-resistant gonorrhea and drug-resistant *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, a leading cause of bacterial pneumonia and meningitis.

Of the roughly 6,000 U.S. hospitals, about 2,400 voluntarily submit monthly data on antibiotic use to the CDC, Srinivasan said; of those, about 1,100 are also providing data about resistant bugs.

“We don’t have the data because our surveillance systems weren’t able to even function to provide us that information during the pandemic,” Srinivasan said. “That should be every bit as alarming to people as the pathogens that went up. It’s just as alarming when you don’t know.”

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HEADLINE	<b>07/13 Attritional struggle for eastern Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/13/europe/ukraine-russia-next-stages-donetsk-intl/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/13/europe/ukraine-russia-next-stages-donetsk-intl/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>(CNN)When Vladimir Putin refocused his war in Ukraine on the <a href="#">country's east</a> three months ago, he did so bruised by the failures of his initial lunge towards Kyiv and desperate for a face-saving success.</p> <p>After a slow and bloody march through Luhansk was finalized with the <a href="#">capture of the city of Lysychansk</a>, the Russian President might consider himself halfway there.</p> <p>But the war has arrived at another crossroads and fighters on both sides are steeling themselves for a third act of fighting that could tip the balance of the conflict.</p>

"It's a very attritional struggle," said Justin Bronk, a senior research fellow for Airpower and Technology at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), describing the tone of the war after three months of fighting in Donbas.

"It's a struggle between two armies, both of whom have taken huge losses and are very close to exhaustion."

Putin's next move is anticipated to be a drive into Donetsk, which if captured would fulfill the Kremlin's primary objective: overrunning the entire Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, which has housed Russian-backed separatist factions since 2014.

But when and how that takes place is unclear. While Russia has continued intense airstrikes on various fronts in Ukraine, the US-based think tank Institute for the Study of War (ISW) said Sunday that Russian ground troops were in the middle of an operational pause to "rest, refit, and reconstitute."

That could give Ukraine's army time to prepare to defend the parts of Donetsk it still holds; chiefly the industrial belt running south from the city of Sloviansk. And the threat of Ukrainian counter-offensives elsewhere in the country, including the key southern city of Kherson, remains.

The next phase of full-scale fighting, when it does break out, may not be the last. But it may determine the future of [Ukraine's heartland region](#) -- and analysts say it will go some considerable way to determining the war's results.

### **Lessons from Luhansk**

The past three months of grueling, grinding warfare in Donbas have looked almost nothing like the opening act of Russia's invasion, which saw scattergun incursions from north, east and west and ended in a decisive failure to overrun Kyiv and other key Ukrainian cities.

Instead, the Kremlin's refocused effort has tightened the boundaries of the war, zeroing in on a key path across Luhansk and towards Donetsk to which the bulk of Russia's resources were directed.

"The second phase of this war has seen Russia returning to basics," Max Bergmann, the director of the Europe program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told CNN.

That has resulted in [sluggish but steady progress](#) for Russia, which has won several weeklong battles for strategic cities and exposed limitations in Ukraine's arsenal. "They've used their mass, their artillery assets, and (have been) pummeling Ukrainian forces while operating in a slow grind," Bergmann said.

Its advantages in weaponry and firepower have started to show. "All of (Russia's) electronic warfare, air defense and armored formations can be concentrated on very small areas," allowing them to "create local superiority" over Ukraine's more stretched, defensive positions, said Bronk.

"Round one was a knockout for Ukraine. In round two, the Russians won on points," said Bergmann in his assessment of the war's opening phases.

But three months of war has taken its toll on both armies, and the capture of Luhansk brings two exhausted militaries to an inflection point.

"Russian forces will likely continue to confine themselves to small-scale offensive actions as they rebuild forces and set conditions for a more significant offensive in the coming weeks or months," [the ISW said](#) on Thursday.

Fighting has continued near the Donetsk-Luhansk border; the Ukrainian military on Friday listed more than 40 towns and villages in Donbas that have come under attack in the last 24 hours, acknowledging "partial success" of a Russian attempt to advance on one front near the city of Bakhmut.

But the ISW nonetheless has assessed that an operational pause for Russian ground troops is underway, and the pace of Russian territorial gains dropped last week following their takeover of Luhansk.

The benefits of some form of lull for both armies are obvious; Russia's depleted forces need recuperation, while Ukraine's military is in a race to receive, deliver and become familiar with Western equipment.

"Russian troops that fought through Severodonetsk and Lysychansk very likely do need a significant period in which to rest and refit before resuming large-scale offensive operations," according to the ISW.

"It seems like we're in a stasis, but it's a very unstable balance and we don't know which way it will break," Bergmann said. "Behind the scenes, there will be a frantic effort on both sides to prepare for future offensives." Whichever side uses this period more effectively could be able to seize the upper hand when all-out fighting resumes.

### **The war's next flashpoints**

Russia's anticipated next move will be to continue the path it has forged through Luhansk, moving into Ukrainian-controlled parts of Donetsk and attempting to wear down and encircle Ukrainian troops in that oblast too.

Doing so would deliver the symbolically significant Donbas region to Moscow -- and complete the main objective that Putin laid out as he launched his invasion in February, when he falsely claimed that those regions are spiritually and culturally Russian, and that Russian speakers were being persecuted there.

But if the timeline and tactics used in Luhansk are repeated in its neighbor region, it will take another bitter and bloody fight.

"There's two names that are sadly going to become very familiar" as the key battles in the next phase of fighting -- the cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, in northern Donetsk. "I suspect they will be the next Severodonetsk and Mariupol," said Samir Puri, a senior fellow in urban security and hybrid warfare at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), who worked as a ceasefire observer in Donbas between 2014 and 2015.

Those cities have been primed to become flashpoints in the war for months; they now sit surrounded to the east and south by Russian-controlled territory and their capture would be a major breakthrough for the Kremlin.

"Probably, they will [attack Sloviansk]. Probably, that is why the incoming hits have become more frequent," the head of the city's military-civilian administration, Vadym Liakh, said on Wednesday, adding that currently Ukrainian forces were holding Moscow's armies on the Siverskyi Donetsk river.

"I think that as soon as the enemy is able to carry out assault operations, it will begin the destruction of the infrastructure and the city itself," Liakh said.

The tenor of fighting in the region is likely to look similar to Russia's drives into cities like Severodonetsk and Lysychansk, whose fall marked the end of Ukraine's defense of Luhansk.

Ukraine's defense is again expected to be stubborn. "They want to make this as hard and long a slog as possible for the Russians," said Bergmann. "That's how they have pursued this war; they have fought the Russians for every inch of territory, and when it becomes a tactical mistake to keep fighting they withdraw, but not precipitously."

"You fall back, but as you fall back, you fight."

But as with Luhansk, Russia will hope to seize the front foot and grind down the Ukrainian resistance, which will struggle to launch effective offenses. "(Ukraine) will have the ability to slowly bleed the

Russians through Donetsk," but may lack the "availability of infantry and armored formations that are equipped and fresh enough to punch forward," said Puri.

"They're having to experience a military metamorphosis to get to that offensive capability."

There will, meanwhile, be flare-ups in other regions that could disrupt Russia's main objectives in Donbas. In recent weeks Ukraine has regained Snake Island and had some success with counter-offensives near Kherson, southern Ukraine, which are now ramping up and forcing Russia onto the defensive.

On Monday night, the Ukrainian military struck what it said was a Russian ammunition depot in the town of Nova Kakhovka in Kherson region, in what appeared to be one of the largest attacks inside Russian-occupied territory since the war began. A Russian official said the Ukrainian strike was carried out with a long-range HIMARS artillery system supplied by the United States, but claimed the attack hit a fertilizer warehouse and homes.

Ukraine has begun targeting Russian command posts and ammunition dumps far behind the front lines in both Kherson and Donbas, using newly supplied Western weaponry that has a much greater range than its previous artillery systems.

Serhii Khlan, an advisor to the head of Kherson civil military administration, said Tuesday: "We have already launched attacks along almost the entire front line" -- and the Russians were now reinforcing their checkpoints "because the partisan movement is intensifying in the Kherson region. He added that Russia is "preparing for street battles" in the city.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian news outlet Ria-Melitopol reported last week that large amounts of Russian military equipment has been seen moving through Melitopol, including tank and armored vehicle convoys, towards Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. Last week, Russian-appointed authorities in the Kherson region arrested the elected Ukrainian mayor of the city, Ihor Kolykhaiev, hours before announcing plans for a referendum to join Russia.

"The focus for the Russians very much is still in that small area (in the Donbas), whereas for the Ukrainians it seems to be pushing forwards and creating a breakthrough in Kherson," Bronk said. Doing so "would create really quite a serious problem for Russia."

Kherson was seized and occupied by Russia in the early days of the invasion. If the Ukrainians were able to seize it back, it would disrupt Russian supply lines, cut its land bridge to Crimea and represent a significant boost to morale.

### **Grasping for firepower**

Russia's war in Ukraine is pushing towards the six-month mark, and the course of its next phase will depend heavily on the firepower and weaponry each side can still draw on.

The head of the Luhansk region military administration, Serhiy Hayday, said this week that Ukraine is inflicting significant losses on Russia's armies in the Donbas, and claimed that with the help of additional Western long-range weaponry, "the advantage of the enemy in personnel will be leveled."

The Russian Ministry of Defense does not regularly report the number of dead and injured among its forces and CNN could not independently verify Hayday's claims about Russian casualties. However, independent analysts and observers, including some Russian military bloggers, have criticized the effort made by Moscow to capture the city of Lysychansk, saying it was too costly.

"We'll get a good sense of the depths of Russia's military reserves" as they push into Donbas, Bergmann said. "The bombarding strategy works if you have a defense-industrial base that is pumping out munitions ... (but) they have huge stockpiles, huge reserves." It also forces an expensive and time-consuming effort to rebuild decimated cities like Mariupol, where virtually all infrastructure was destroyed during Russia's assault.



Some analysts have speculated that Russia's increasing use of older, less precise missiles like the KH-22, first developed in the 1960s, suggests its reserves are becoming depleted.

Soviet-era tanks have also been introduced to the frontlines; as early as May, 50-year-old T-62 tanks were being brought out of "deep storage" to assist the effort, [according to British intelligence](#).

Ukraine faces the opposite problem. The country is being sent vast swathes of high-tech, Western weaponry on which it is heavily reliant, and officials are asking at each opportunity for more. But the hodgepodge arrivals of various fighting systems from dozens of countries is providing Ukraine's military with both a lifeline and a headache.

"It's a bit of a logistical nightmare; they're getting lots of different versions (of weaponry) from lots of different countries," Bronk said. "They don't take the same ammunition -- they have different logistics (and) different maintenance concerns."

Once weapons arrive at the frontlines -- and that process requires a complex supply chain -- soldiers need to be taught how to use them.

In some cases, that even requires troops to leave the country. The British army has in recent weeks trained hundreds of Ukrainian troops in Wiltshire, southern England, while Germany has said it plans to teach soldiers how to use the multiple launch rocket system Mars II.

"Ukraine has an immense logistical challenge: they have to shift a military that was rooted in Russian and Soviet equipment, and modernize towards using NATO equipment -- while fighting a war," Bergmann said.

"The big open question is whether (they) can really incorporate the Western weaponry they're receiving being Russia can reconstitute their forces."

### **A lengthy war**

The focus of Ukraine's military and the watching West is on repelling Russia's next assault in the east. But if the pace of Russia's movement through Luhansk is replicated in Donetsk, the war would stretch into the fall and towards the winter -- and some analysts are starting to weigh the long-term implications of fighting.

It is far from certain that Putin would halt his invasion if he were to take the entirety of the Donbas. "I don't think the ambitions of the Russians (beyond the east) have completely dissolved," Bergmann said. "They're really determined to control the Donbas, but if they can make gains they're going to try to make more gains."

Should Putin look beyond the boundaries of Donbas, he may decide to push towards the banks of the Dnipro River, which bisects Ukraine from north to south. Doing so would represent an effort to seize half of the country, a move that would appall the West and considerably lengthen the war.

NATO nations have repeatedly committed to supporting Ukraine regardless of how long the war takes.

But economic factors will start to bite on all sides if the war is still waging next year. "Even if you have the will (to support Ukraine), you may have significantly diminished capacity if the economy is tanking," Bronk said, noting spiraling inflation and the struggling financial health of Western nations. But the same is truer still for Russia, whose economy has been badly hit by sanctions.

Ukraine, too, has a potential economic disaster looming and so will continue to rely on Western financial support, as well as military aid. "Its economy has been essentially destroyed by the Russian invasion," Bronk noted, with the ability to import and export through the Black Sea wiped away and its [domestic](#)

[grain production severely diminished](#) this year. In April, the World Bank predicted Ukraine's economy would shrink by 45% this year.

In that context, many Western countries could look to peace negotiations for a lifeline. The US and its allies have [placed a renewed emphasis](#) on the need for a negotiated settlement to end the war in recent weeks.

But regardless of when and how the war ends, countries throughout the West are already seeking to bolster their own defenses to counter the Russian threat -- even while transporting weapons and intelligence to Ukraine.

"Russia has set itself on a course for serious, long-term confrontation with the West," Bronk said. "(So) the west needs to balance supplying Ukraine with generating their own military capabilities." Russia, too, will look to preserve much of its military capability to act as a counterweight to NATO's forces in Europe.

Zelensky told G7 leaders last month that he wanted to end the war in months, not years. "He believes that a grinding conflict is not in the interest of the Ukrainian people," US national security adviser Jake Sullivan said after the meeting.

Whether that is possible relies on numerous factors, many of which are beyond his control. But experts agree that the coming weeks and months of war in eastern Ukraine will go far in determining the future of Europe's largest land war in decades.

"The battlefield is going to determine what sort of diplomatic settlement is possible, and whether one is possible," Bergmann said. "It's quite unpredictable how this will progress."

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Belarus military drills near Ukraine border</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.foxnews.com/world/belarus-launches-military-drills-border-ukraine-tests-troop-readiness">https://www.foxnews.com/world/belarus-launches-military-drills-border-ukraine-tests-troop-readiness</a>
GIST	<p>Belarus announced Tuesday it launched military drills along its shared border with Ukraine in an effort to assess the <a href="#">readiness of its territorial troops</a>, Belarusian defense officials said.</p> <p>The drills are slated to last from July 12 to 14 and will assess troop preparedness for combat tasks and test the command abilities of reserve officers, the Belarusian Defense Ministry said in a Telegram post.</p> <p>The drills will be held in the Gomel region, which shares a border with Ukraine in an area directly north of Kyiv.</p> <p>Separate communication drills are being held from July 11 to 15 and will be led by the Chief of Communications of the Armed Forces.</p> <p>The Belarusian Ministry of Defense said the training will not only assess the readiness of military units in the area, but will "work out the issues of building up and functioning the communications system."</p> <p>"Tactical and special training with the communications forces" will be overseen by Chief of the Communications Department of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, Major General Oleg Myshchenko.</p> <p>The servicemen will also be trained on new forms of communication networks for field support during combat.</p> <p>The drills were previously planned according to the Belarusian Defense Ministry, though it was unclear when they were planned.</p>

The announcement on the latest round of military drills near Ukraine's northern border comes just one month after Minsk said its forces had begun combat readiness training and weeks after Russia was allowed to fire missiles at Ukrainian targets from within Belarus' borders.

In early June [Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy](#) said the threat of a ground invasion by Belarus in support of Russia was minimal but noted that Ukraine was "preparing for all the risks of an invasion."

By late June, Zelenskyy had accused Moscow of attempting to drag Minsk into the war after the Ukrainian Defense Ministry said "a mass rocket-bomb strike was launched" after 12 cruise missiles were fired from Russian planes flying over Belarusian airspace.

Western defense officials have long assessed that Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko – the only European leader to back Moscow – is balancing the threat of entering a war and his [unwavering support for Russian President Vladimir Putin](#).

Lukashenko – who faced mass protests following the 2020 re-election that many believed was rigged – could face backlash at home, international sanctions and [resistance in the Belarusian armed forces](#) if he enters Putin's war.

It is unclear how well Ukraine would be able to fend off a second offensive in the north as its eastern and southern regions continued to be pummeled by Russian forces.

Ukrainian officials have suggested they have a plan to counter Russia's forces in its southern regions by launching "a million-strong" resistance force equipped with modern western weaponry.

"We have approximately 700,000 in the armed forces and when you add the national guard, police, border guard, we are around a million-strong." Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov told The Times Sunday.

Ukraine has urged civilians in its southern regions to evacuate as soon as they can ahead of the counter-attack.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/13 China trade surplus surges to record</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-trade-surplus-surges-record-exports-accelerate-86726004">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-trade-surplus-surges-record-exports-accelerate-86726004</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- China's monthly trade surplus soared to a record \$97.9 billion in June as export growth picked up after anti-virus controls that shut down Shanghai were lifted and shippers moved a backlog of cargo.</p> <p>Exports rose 17.9% over a year ago to \$331.2 billion, up from May's 16.9% growth, customs data showed Wednesday. In a sign of Chinese economic weakness, imports rose just 1% to \$233.3 billion, pushing up the trade surplus by 90% from a year ago.</p> <p>Imports from Russia, mostly oil and gas, rose 56% over a year ago as Beijing took advantage of price cuts offered by the Kremlin after Washington and Europe suspended most of their own purchases to punish Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>China's trade already was depressed by weak global demand before Shanghai, site of the world's busiest port, and other cities shut down starting in late March. Cargo handling is back to normal, but economists warn the shock will be felt abroad for months.</p> <p>"Exports rebounded strongly as shipping bottlenecks eased," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics in a report. "But we think this may be the last hurrah for China's pandemic export boom before shipments drop back on cooling demand."</p>

Weak import demand reflects a slump in construction, a major customer for foreign iron ore and other raw materials, after the government launched a crackdown on debt that has chilled the vast real estate industry.

Forecasters have cut estimates for China's economic growth to as low as 2% this year, well below the ruling Communist Party's target of 5.5%.

China's economy grew by a weak 4.8% over a year earlier in the quarter ending in March. That was an improvement over the 4% rate in the final three months of 2021.

Some believe it shrank in the quarter ending in June before beginning a gradual recovery. Surveys show that might be under way as manufacturing and service activity accelerates.

If that lasts, "the outlook for the second half of 2022 is for stronger imports," Rajiv Biswas of S&P Global Market Intelligence said in a report.

Exports to the United States surged 19.3% over a year earlier to \$56 billion despite lingering tariff hikes in a trade war over Beijing's technology ambitions. Imports of American goods edged up 1.7% to \$14.6 billion.

China's politically volatile trade surplus with the United States widened by 26% from a year earlier to \$41.4 billion. It was among irritants that prompted then-President Donald Trump to launch the trade fight and hike import taxes.

Envoys from the two governments have talked by phone and video link but have yet to announce a date to resume face-to-face negotiations.

Exports to the 27-nation European Union rose 17.1% from last June to \$50.5 billion, while imports of European goods climbed 9.7% to \$25 billion. China's trade surplus with Europe widened by 65% to \$25.4 billion.

Imports from Russia rose 56% over a year ago to \$9.7 billion.

China's growing purchases of Russian energy are irritating Washington and its allies but don't violate sanctions on Moscow.

Beijing declared ahead of the attack that it had a "no limits" friendship with Moscow. It criticizes the sanctions but has avoided helping Putin for fear of losing access to Western markets and the global banking system.

The Biden administration last month accused five Chinese companies of dealing with the Russian military before the Feb. 24 invasion. They added them to a trade blacklist but officials did not say if they were accused of supplying goods after the attack.

Last year, China bought 20% of Russian crude exports, according to the International Energy Agency.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Greece, Bulgaria pipeline offsets Russia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/correction-greece-bulgaria-gas-link-story-86693418">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/correction-greece-bulgaria-gas-link-story-86693418</a>
GIST	<p>ATHENS, Greece -- The leaders of Greece and Bulgaria on Friday marked the completion of a new pipeline that will supply natural gas from Azerbaijan to Bulgaria, whose vital supply of Russian gas was cut off in April amid the fallout over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis stressed the importance of the new link as an alternative supply line for Bulgaria, as neighboring Greece jockey to become a regional energy transport hub.</p>

“This isn't just a gas pipeline, but a crucial south-north energy bridge,” Mitsotakis said during a ceremony in northeastern Greece.

He added that Europe needs to coordinate its response to “Moscow’s conscious choice to turn natural resources into a lever of political pressure, into a raw blackmail.”

“It is something our Bulgarian neighbors already know very well,” Mitsotakis said.

In late April, Russia cut off gas supplies to Bulgaria after it refused a demand by Moscow to pay gas bills in rubles, Russia’s currency. Relations between the two former Soviet bloc allies have tanked in recent months, and last month Bulgaria ordered the expulsion of 70 Russian diplomats, triggering an angry response from Moscow.

Bulgaria’s acting prime minister, Kiril Petkov, highlighted the pipeline’s key role in ending Russia’s gas monopoly in his country.

"Thus, for the first time, our country will have real terrestrial access to alternative energy sources other than the Russian ones," Petkov said.

The 182-kilometer (115-mile) pipeline will run from the northeastern Greek city of Komotini to Stara Zagora in central Bulgaria. It starts with an initial capacity of 3 billion cubic meters of gas a year, and the prospect of future expansion to 5 billion cubic meters. Commercial deliveries are expected to start by Oct. 1.

Greece is looking to serve as an energy hub for the Balkans, using fossil fuels from the Caspian Sea and the southeastern Mediterranean, and, potentially renewable energy from Egypt, to supply the region amid the fallout of the war in Ukraine.

Greece is also building a liquefied natural gas terminal off the northeastern port of Alexandroupolis, near Komotini, which Mitsotakis said would in the future provide additional gas for the new Greek-Bulgarian pipeline.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Most dangerous states for pedestrians</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/report-highlights-dangerous-places-walk-america/story?id=86662072">https://abcnews.go.com/US/report-highlights-dangerous-places-walk-america/story?id=86662072</a>
GIST	<p>The nation’s streets are becoming more deadly for pedestrians, according to <a href="#">a new report released</a> today.</p> <p>The report by Smart Growth America and the National Complete Streets Coalition found that in 2020, more than 6,500 people were struck and killed while walking. That averages out to 18 people a day – a 4.5% increase from 2019.</p> <p>However, for Black, Native and low-income pedestrians, the risks of walking in the U.S. are high. Black pedestrians are twice as likely to be struck and killed while walking than white pedestrians, while Native people are more than three times as likely to be fatally hit.</p> <p>Low-income neighborhoods are also more likely to experience more pedestrian deaths, the research found.</p> <p>These neighborhoods may have the deadly combination of having fewer sidewalks and parks, as well as more arterial roads that lead to higher speeds and more traffic that leads to more pedestrian fatalities.</p> <p>The Tampa-Clearwater metro area in Florida is one of the deadliest regions, according to the report.</p> <p>Whit Blanton, the executive director of the Pinellas County-based <a href="#">land use and transportation planning agency Forward Pinellas</a>, says the prioritization of cars as the main form of transportation has made some places unwalkable.</p>

He told ABC News that many regions like Pinellas County were developed with the automobile as the focus, and though plenty of downtown areas are walkable ... “the vast majority of people don't live downtown.”

“You're walking next to 45-50 mile an hour traffic that’s lined with commercial retail shops, a lot of driveways and parking out front,” Blanton said, listing the walkability issues plaguing regions across the country. “When you walk, you have to walk through a parking lot to get to the front door of whatever business or destination you have in mind. You have to cross some big wide roads and drivers are frequently allowed to turn right on red.”

Research from the report found that highways across the country were oftentimes built through or close to Black, brown, or low-income neighborhoods – making them harder to live in, destroying businesses, displacing residents and making them unfriendly to pedestrians.

The [Governors Highway Safety Association](#) (GHSA) estimates that the number of pedestrian deaths is only going to increase.

The agency estimates that 7,485 people were struck and killed while walking in 2021, which would be the highest number in 40 years.

However, not all regions are equal when it comes to walkability.

The top 10 deadliest states, starting with the deadliest, include: New Mexico, Florida, South Carolina, Arizona, Delaware, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, as well as Georgia and California.

The top 10 deadliest metro areas for pedestrians, starting with the deadliest, include: Deltona-Daytona Beach-Ormond Beach, Florida; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Memphis, Tennessee; Tampa-Clearwater, Florida; Charleston-North Charleston, South Carolina; Jacksonville, Florida; Bakersfield, California; Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, Florida; Stockton, California; and Fresno, California.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/13 US Navy patrol inflames China sea dispute</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/us-destroyer-patrol-inflames-south-china-sea-dispute-86724724">https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/us-destroyer-patrol-inflames-south-china-sea-dispute-86724724</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- The U.S. Navy on Wednesday sailed a destroyer close to <a href="#">China</a>-controlled islands in the South China Sea in what Washington said was a patrol aimed at asserting freedom of navigation through the strategic seaway.</p> <p>The guided-missile destroyer USS Benfold sailed past the Paracel Islands and continued thereafter with operations in the South China Sea.</p> <p>The operation “upheld the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea,” the 7th Fleet said in a news release.</p> <p>Such operations are considered key to the U.S. Navy maintaining its presence in the Indo-Pacific, where China has grown its presence through a massive ship building campaign.</p> <p>Beijing has also alarmed the U.S., Australia and New Zealand with the signing of a mutual defense agreement with the Solomon Islands, under which it could receive Chinese troops in emergencies and possibly establish a permanent Chinese military presence.</p> <p>In response to the Benfold's passage, China's Southern Theater Command tracked the vessel's movements and ordered it to leave the area, Air Force Col. Tian Junli was quoted as saying on the Defense Ministry's website.</p>



	<p>“Our troops in the military area are on high alert at all times to safeguard national sovereignty, security and peace and stability in the South China Sea,” the ministry said.</p> <p>China claims ownership over virtually the entire strategic waterway, through which passes around \$5 trillion in global trade each year and which holds highly valuable fish stocks and undersea mineral resources. The Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and Taiwan also lay competing claims to the region.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/13 Rise, fall Sri Lanka president; flees country</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/history-rise-fall-sri-lankas-president-86708851">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/history-rise-fall-sri-lankas-president-86708851</a>
GIST	<p>COLOMBO, Sri Lanka -- Before he fled Sri Lanka on Wednesday amid a crushing economic crisis, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa was the last of six members of the country's most influential family still clinging to power.</p> <p>Rajapaksa, his wife and two bodyguards flew to the city of Male, the capital of the Maldives, according to an immigration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the situation.</p> <p>His departure comes four days after massive crowds broke into his official residence and occupied his seaside office, and he pledged to leave the country. Protesters also stormed the residence of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who has said he will leave once a new government is in place.</p> <p>Here is a closer look at the rise and fall of Rajapaksa:</p> <p>—</p> <p><b>A FAMILY AFFAIR</b></p> <p>For decades, the powerful land-owning Rajapaksa family had dominated local politics in their rural southern district before Mahinda Rajapaksa was elected president in 2005. Appealing to the nationalist sentiment of the island’s Buddhist-Sinhalese majority, he led Sri Lanka into a triumphant victory over ethnic Tamil rebels in 2009, ending a 26-year brutal civil war that had divided the country. His younger brother, Gotabaya, was a powerful official and military strategist in the Ministry of Defense.</p> <p>Mahinda remained in office until 2015, when he lost to the opposition led by his former aide. But the family made a comeback in 2019, when Gotabaya won the presidential election on a promise to restore security in the wake of the Easter Sunday terrorist suicide bombings that killed 290 people.</p> <p>He vowed to bring back the muscular nationalism that had made his family popular with the Buddhist majority, and to lead the country out of an economic slump with a message of stability and development.</p> <p>Instead, he made a series of fatal mistakes that ushered in an unprecedented crisis.</p> <p><b>TAX CUTS DRAIN GOVERNMENT FUNDS</b></p> <p>As tourism plunged in the wake of the bombings and foreign loans on controversial development projects — including a port and an airport in the president’s home region — needed to be repaid, Rajapaksa didn't listen to economic advisers and pushed through the largest tax cuts in the country’s history. It was meant to spur spending, but critics warned it would slash the government’s finances. Pandemic lockdowns and an ill-advised ban on chemical fertilizers further hurt the fragile economy.</p> <p>The country soon ran out of money and couldn’t repay its huge debts. Shortages of food, cooking gas, fuel and medicine stoked public anger at what many saw as mismanagement, corruption and nepotism.</p>

## THE END BEGINS

The family's unravelling began in April, when growing protests forced three Rajapaksa relatives, including the finance minister, to quit their Cabinet posts and another to leave his ministerial job. In May, government supporters attacked protesters in a wave of violence that left nine dead. The anger of the protesters turned against Mahinda Rajapaksa, who was pressured to resign as prime minister and took refuge on a heavily fortified naval base.

But Gotabaya refused to go, triggering chants in the streets of "Gota Go Home!" Instead, he saw his savior in Wickremesinghe, a seasoned opposition politician who he brought in to steer the country out of the abyss. Ultimately, however, Wickremesinghe lacked the political heft and public support needed to get the job done.

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## Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	07/13 FTC overwatch on data anonymization
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/07/us-ftc-vows-to-crack-down-on-illegal.html">https://thehackernews.com/2022/07/us-ftc-vows-to-crack-down-on-illegal.html</a>
GIST	<p>The U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) warned this week that it will crack down on tech companies' illegal use and sharing of highly sensitive data and false claims about data anonymization.</p> <p>"While many consumers may happily offer their location data in exchange for real-time crowd-sourced advice on the fastest route home, they likely think differently about having their thinly-disguised online identity associated with the frequency of their visits to a therapist or cancer doctor," FTC's Kristin Cohen <a href="#">said</a>.</p> <p>The sensitive nature of information about users' health and their precise whereabouts has prompted the agency to caution against opaque practices in the "shadowy ad tech and <a href="#">data broker ecosystem</a>," with consumers having little to no knowledge of how their personal data is harvested, used, and processed.</p> <p>What's more, mobile apps are known to embed software development kits (SDKs) that claim to collect and share anonymized user information with third-parties, including data aggregators that gather such data from myriad sources and then sell access to it.</p> <p>"These companies often build profiles about consumers and draw inferences about them based on the places they have visited," the FTC said, adding the abuse of mobile location and health information exposes users to "significant harm."</p> <p>To that end, the consumer protection authority said it intends to "vigorously enforce" the law should it uncover cases where location, health, or other sensitive data are exploited for profit or other ulterior motives.</p> <p>"Companies may try to placate consumers' privacy concerns by claiming they anonymize or aggregate data," it further stated. "Firms making claims about anonymization should be on guard that these claims can be a deceptive trade practice and violate the <a href="#">FTC Act</a> when untrue."</p> <p>Data anonymization refers to the <a href="#">practice</a> of protecting private or sensitive information by stripping off identifiers such as names, social security numbers, and addresses that connect an individual to stored data. However, it's been <a href="#">repeatedly established</a> that anonymized data can often be re-identified when combining several datasets, forming a "surprisingly clear picture of our identities."</p>

	<p>In 2016, a <a href="#">study</a> found that any four apps selected at random can be used to re-identify a user in a pseudo-anonymized dataset more than 95% of the time based on information collected from 54,893 Android users over a period of seven months.</p> <p>Then last July, Vice <a href="#">took the wraps off</a> an "entire overlooked industry" that explicitly functions to link <a href="#">mobile advertising IDs</a> (MAIDs) collected by apps to personally identifiable information (PII), effectively defeating the anonymity protections.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Qakbot attempts to avoid detection</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/07/researchers-uncover-new-attempts-by.html">https://thehackernews.com/2022/07/researchers-uncover-new-attempts-by.html</a>
GIST	<p>The operators behind the Qakbot malware are transforming their delivery vectors in an attempt to sidestep detection.</p> <p>"Most recently, threat actors have transformed their techniques to evade detection by using ZIP file extensions, enticing file names with common formats, and Excel (XLM) 4.0 to trick victims into downloading malicious attachments that install Qakbot," Zscaler Threatlabz researchers Tarun Dewan and Aditya Sharma <a href="#">said</a>.</p> <p>Other methods adopted by the group include code obfuscation, introducing new layers in the attack chain from initial compromise to execution, and using multiple URLs as well as unknown file extensions (e.g., .OCX, .oocccxx, .dat, or .gyp) to deliver the payload.</p> <p>Also called QBot, QuackBot, or Pinkslipbot, Qakbot has been a <a href="#">recurring threat</a> since late 2007, evolving from its initial days as a banking trojan to a modular information stealer capable of deploying next-stage payloads such as <a href="#">ransomware</a>.</p> <p>"Qakbot is a flexible post-exploitation tool that incorporates various layers of defense evasion techniques designed to minimize detections," Fortinet <a href="#">disclosed</a> in December 2021.</p> <p>"Qakbot's modular design and infamous resiliency in the face of traditional signature-based detection make it a desirable first choice for many financially motivated groups (cyber criminals)."</p> <p>The shifting tactics adopted by the malware from XLM macros in early 2022 to .LNK files in May is seen as an attempt to counter Microsoft's plans to block Office macros by default in April 2022, a decision it has since <a href="#">temporarily rolled back</a>.</p> <p>In addition, further modifications include the use of PowerShell to download the DLL malware and a switch from regsvr32.exe to rundll32.exe to load the payload, in what the researchers described as a "clear sign of Qakbot evolving to evade updated security practices and defenses."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/13 New variants ChromeLoader malware</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/07/researchers-uncover-new-variants-of.html">https://thehackernews.com/2022/07/researchers-uncover-new-variants-of.html</a>
GIST	<p>Cybersecurity researchers have uncovered new variants of the <a href="#">ChromeLoader</a> information-stealing malware, highlighting its evolving feature set in a short span of time.</p> <p>Primarily used for hijacking victims' browser searches and presenting advertisements, ChromeLoader came to light in January 2022 and has been distributed in the form of ISO or DMG file downloads advertised via QR codes on Twitter and free gaming sites.</p> <p>ChromeLoader has also been codenamed Choziosi Loader and ChromeBack by the broader cybersecurity community. What makes the adware notable is that it's fashioned as a browser extension as opposed to a Windows executable (.exe) or Dynamic Link Library (.dll).</p>

Besides requesting invasive permissions to access browser data and manipulate web requests, it's also designed to capture users' search engine queries on Google, Yahoo, and Bing, effectively allowing the threat actors to harvest their online behavior.

While the first Windows variant of ChromeLoader malware was spotted in January, a macOS version of the malware emerged in March to distribute the rogue Chrome extension (version 6.0) in the form of disk image (DMG) files.

But a new analysis from Palo Alto Networks Unit 42 [indicates](#) that the earliest known attack involving the malware occurred in December 2021 using an AutoHotKey-compiled executable in place of the later-observed ISO files.

"This malware was an executable file written using AutoHotKey ([AHK](#)) — a framework used for scripting automation," Unit 42 researcher Nadav Barak said, adding it was used to drop "version 1.0" of the browser add-on.

This first version is also said to lack obfuscation capabilities, a feature that has been picked up in subsequent iterations of the malware to conceal its purpose and malicious code.

Also observed in March 2022 was a previously undocumented campaign using the 6.0 version of the Chrome extension and relies on an ISO image that contains a seemingly benign Windows shortcut, but, in reality, acts as a conduit to launch a hidden file in the mounted image which deploys the malware.

"This malware demonstrates how determined cybercriminals and malware authors can be: In a short time period, the authors of ChromeLoader released multiple different code versions, used multiple programming frameworks, enhanced features, advanced obfuscators, fixed issues, and even adding cross-OS support targeting both Windows and macOS," Barak said.

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HEADLINE	07/12 Ukraine: significant rise cyberattacks
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/malware/ukraines-cyber-agency-tracks-significant-increase-in-malware-directed-attacks">https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/malware/ukraines-cyber-agency-tracks-significant-increase-in-malware-directed-attacks</a>
GIST	<p>Five months after Russia's invasion, Ukraine continues to see significant increases in cyberattacks targeting state systems and infrastructure as a result of the war, according to the country's top cyber defense agency.</p> <p>A new report released Tuesday by <a href="#">Ukraine's State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection (SSSCIP)</a> claims that while the months leading up to and immediately following the invasion included a flurry of 40 distinct critical cyberattacks, the frequency and volume has risen substantially over the second quarter of the year. Drawing from its national Vulnerability Detection and Cyber Incidents/Cyber Attacks Response System, the agency has observed another 24 registered incidents and 19 billion "events" targeting state and critical infrastructure, with the main targets being the Ukrainian government, local authorities and mass media institutions.</p> <p>The number of critical events classified as "malicious code" incidents were also up 38% compared with the first three months of the year, something that "indicates [a] significant increase in the level of malicious network activity associated with malware distribution and malware usage attempts for infecting new/ exploitation of previously infected botnet devices." Those incidents largely leveraged major browsers like Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari and Opera as malware distribution channels, though other software like Outlook and BitTorrent were also used. Remote code execution and bypassing authentication protocols were the most popular forms of exploits used.</p> <p>"The main goal of hackers remains cyberespionage, disruption of the availability of state information services and even destruction of information systems with the help of wipers," the agency wrote. "In the</p>

second quarter of 2022, we saw a significant increase in the activity of hacker groups in the distribution of malware, which includes both data stealing and data destruction programs.”

While the agency believes “the absolute majority” of those attacks have been directed by Russia and hacking groups like Sandworm and Gamaredon, the IP addresses for the most recent wave have largely come from outside Russia, something SSSCIP attributes to internet service providers cutting off service to known Russian government IPs in the aftermath of the invasion. Cybersecurity experts often warn against relying on IP addresses to attribute cyberattacks, as many hacking groups have become adept at using VPNs and command-and-control infrastructure purchased or established in other countries to cover their tracks.

#### **Activity from hacktivists, other actors a defining trait of Russian-Ukrainian conflict**

One of the defining traits of the war has been an unprecedented amount of activity from “hacktivists” or non-state actors who have jumped into the fray on one side or another. In addition to Sandworm, Gamaredon, Fancy Bear and other advanced persistent threat groups linked to the Russian government, there’s also evidence criminal hacking groups and botnets have upped their level of activity.

Earlier this month, IBM’s X-Force security team released [research](#) indicating that between mid-April and mid-June, the TrickBot group and [Conti ransomware gang](#) have been “been systematically attacking Ukraine since the Russian invasion,” with at least six distinct hacking campaigns leveraging a variety of malware strains. This is notable because the researchers say TrickBot previously did not have a meaningful footprint in the country prior to the invasion and previous versions of their malware configured to avoid Ukrainian-language systems and devices.

“The observed activities reported in this blog highlight a trend of this group choosing targets that align with Russian state interests against the backdrop of the ongoing conflict,” wrote Ole Villadsen, Charlotte Hammond and Kat Weinberger on July 7.

But the “hacktivism” has also included loosely formed vigilante groups from around the world that have been targeting Russia and its war effort. Ukrainian Vice Prime Minister Mkhailo Fedorov sanctioning a volunteer “IT Army” made up of international volunteers who could conduct offensive operations against Russian government and infrastructure.

Fedorov coordinated the project via Telegram and translated targeting directives into English for international audiences, as SC Media’s Joe Uchill [reported](#) in March. Last month, Bloomberg [reported](#) that Belarussian hackers who oppose their government and its support for the war have been launching cyberattacks to disrupt the rail systems Russia used to mobilize troops.

The encouragement of such campaigns by the Ukrainian government has in turn has caused friction with U.S. counterparts, who have spent years publicly calling on the Russian government to crack down on ransomware attacks and other malicious activity coming from inside their borders. At the RSA Conference in San Francisco last month, NSA cybersecurity director Rob Joyce said that as much as U.S. officials want to see Ukraine succeed, the endorsement of international vigilante hacking groups has complicated those efforts.

“I think all of us wanted to root for those folks. It was a little bit of a challenge that they were out there launching attacks on another country in an era where we’re trying to hold the Russians accountable for the attacks emanating out of their space, right?” said Joyce. “So as much as we wanted to root for those folks and confer a job well done, it really did cause problems in the way we’re trying to set international norms.”

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HEADLINE	07/12 Expect spike in Amazon Prime scams
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/spike-amazon-prime-scams/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/spike-amazon-prime-scams/</a>

GIST	<p>For online shoppers, Amazon Prime Day has become an annual retail event, an opportunity to pick up bargains and save money. However for hackers, it's also an opportunity to target consumers eager to secure a deal.</p> <p>Cybersecurity company Avanan has warned of an increase in phishing and credential harvesting email attempts in June in advance of Amazon's event. It says hackers are using a range of scams to target consumers, including email campaigns that dangle the promise of an Amazon gift card in return for taking a survey.</p> <p>Writing on Avanan's <a href="#">blog</a>, marketing content manager Jeremy Fuchs said that such email campaigns trade heavily on Amazon's brand recognition.</p> <p>"This particular attack starts by utilizing Amazon's name and credibility. When users see an email that appears to come from Amazon, they are more likely to trust it. A subject line which refers to recent deliveries is also something that seems plausible," he said.</p> <p>"Impersonating a brand is a classic social engineering tactic. Impersonating perhaps the world's most recognizable brand is a surefire way to get at least some people to engage."</p> <p>Checkpoint Research <a href="#">found</a> a 37% increase in daily Amazon-related phishing attacks compared to the average in June. Last year, the same organization registered an 86% increase in phishing attempts related to the sale.</p> <p>"All Amazon users should be mindful of spoofed or unauthentic emails. Cyber-criminals utilize this common attack vector because people often focus on the branding and aesthetics of the email to mistakenly click a malicious link. Outside of an order summary or a notification of a remote account login (or log in from a new device), Amazon rarely sends advertising emails," said Darren Guccione, CEO and co-founder at <a href="#">Keeper Security</a>, a Chicago-based provider of zero-trust and zero-knowledge cybersecurity software.</p> <p>"Thus, we do not recommend clicking on any links from emails purportedly sent by Amazon which in actuality may originate from a malicious attacker and thus may not be authentic. These links could contain malware or route a person to a nefarious website to enter their account credentials. Always check the URL that the site navigates you to."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Ransomware attacks on education rise</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ransomware-attacks-education-rise/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ransomware-attacks-education-rise/</a>
GIST	<p>Ransomware attacks on educational institutions have risen substantially in the last year, according to security company <a href="#">Sophos</a>. The company's <i>State of Ransomware in Education 2022</i> <a href="#">report</a> found that 56% of lower education respondents had been hit by ransomware in the past year, along with 64% of higher education institutions. That makes an average of 60% across the education sector overall, up from 44% in the previous year.</p> <p>While education institutions suffer fewer attacks than the 66% global cross-sector average, more encryption-based attacks against this sector are slightly more successful at 73% on average. The global average encryption rate across all sectors sat at 65% over the past year.</p> <p>Almost all education victims got their data back, mostly from backups. Just under half agreed to pay the ransom fee for data retrieval, which typically got them less than two-thirds of their data back.</p> <p>When ransomware strikes the education sector, the results are dire. On average, just over 95% of all education institutions said that ransomware attacks hindered their operations. It took universities and colleges longer to recover, with 40% of them reporting that operations were not back to normal for a</p>



	<p>month, compared to 26% of lower education schools. The education sector had the longest recovery time overall, with an average of 7% taking over three months to recover compared to 4% across all sectors.</p> <p>Educators rely heavily on cyber insurance, with 78% adopting it, and it almost always pays out in the event of a ransomware attack, the report said.</p> <p>The survey covered 730 educational institutions (320 from lower education institutions serving children under 18 and 410 from higher education institutions such as universities and colleges. It was part of a cross-sector poll that covered 5600 respondents across 31 countries.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Microsoft: phishing attacks bypassed MFA</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/microsoft-phishing-bypassed-mfa-in-attacks-against-10-000-orgs/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/microsoft-phishing-bypassed-mfa-in-attacks-against-10-000-orgs/</a>
GIST	<p>Microsoft says a massive series of phishing attacks has targeted more than 10,000 organizations starting with September 2021, using the gained access to victims' mailboxes in follow-on business email compromise (BEC) attacks.</p> <p>The threat actors used landing pages designed to hijack the Office 365 authentication process (even on accounts protected by multifactor authentication (MFA) by spoofing the Office online authentication page.</p> <p>In some of the observed attacks, the potential victims were redirected to the landing pages from phishing emails using HTML attachments that acted as gatekeepers ensuring the targets were being sent via the HTML redirectors.</p> <p>After stealing the targets' credentials and their session cookies, the threat actors behind these attacks logged into the victims' email accounts. They subsequently used their access in business email compromise (BEC) campaigns targeting other organizations.</p> <p>"A large-scale phishing campaign that used adversary-in-the-middle (AiTM) phishing sites stole passwords, hijacked a user's sign-in session, and skipped the authentication process even if the user had enabled multifactor authentication (MFA)," the Microsoft 365 Defender Research Team and Microsoft Threat Intelligence Center (MSTIC) said.</p> <p>"The attackers then used the stolen credentials and session cookies to access affected users' mailboxes and perform follow-on business email compromise (BEC) campaigns against other targets."</p> <p>The phishing process employed in this large-scale phishing campaign can be automated with the help of several open-source phishing toolkits, including the widely-used Evilginx2, Modlishka, and Muraena.</p> <p>The phishing sites used in this campaign worked as reverse proxies and were hosted on web servers designed to proxy the targets' authentication requests to the legitimate website they were trying to sign in to via two separate Transport Layer Security (TLS) sessions.</p> <p>Using this tactic, the attackers' phishing page acted as a man-in-the-middle agent that intercepts the authentication process to extract sensitive information from hijacked HTTP requests, including passwords and, even more importantly, session cookies.</p> <p>After the attackers got their hands on the targets' session cookie, they injected it into their own web browser, which allowed them to skip the authentication process, even if the victims' had MFA enabled on the compromised accounts.</p> <p>To defend against such attacks, Microsoft recommends using "phish-resistant" MFA implementations with certificate-based authentication and Fast ID Online (FIDO) v2.0 support.</p>

	<p>Other recommended best practices that would boost protection include monitoring for suspicious sign-in attempts and mailbox activities, as well as conditional access policies that would block attackers' attempts to use stolen session cookies from non-compliant devices or untrusted IP addresses.</p> <p>"While AiTM phishing attempts to circumvent MFA, it's important to underscore that MFA implementation remains an essential pillar in identity security," <a href="#">Redmond added</a>.</p> <p>"MFA is still very effective at stopping a wide variety of threats; its effectiveness is why AiTM phishing emerged in the first place."</p> <p>Additional technical details and indicators of compromise linked to this campaign are available at the end of <a href="#">Microsoft's report</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/13 Falsified Russian history on Wikipedia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/pkgbwm/chinese-woman-fake-russian-history-wikipedia">https://www.vice.com/en/article/pkgbwm/chinese-woman-fake-russian-history-wikipedia</a>
GIST	<p>Posing as a scholar, a Chinese woman spent years writing alternative accounts of medieval Russian history on Chinese Wikipedia, conjuring imaginary states, battles, and aristocrats in one of the largest hoaxes on the open-source platform.</p> <p>The scam was exposed last month by a Chinese novelist, Yifan, who was researching for a book when he came upon an article on the Kashin silver mine.</p> <p>Discovered by Russian peasants in 1344, the Wikipedia entry goes, the mine engaged more than 40,000 slaves and freedmen, providing a remarkable source of wealth for the Russian principality of Tver in the 14th and 15th centuries as well as subsequent regimes. The geological composition of the soil, the structure of the mine, and even the refining process were fleshed out in detail in the entry.</p> <p>Yifan thought he had found interesting material for a novel. Little did he know he had stumbled upon an entire fictitious world constructed by a user known as Zhemao. It was one of 206 articles she has written on Chinese Wikipedia since 2019, weaving facts into fiction in an elaborate scheme that went uncaught for years and tested the limits of crowdsourced platforms' ability to verify information and fend off bad actors.</p> <p>"The content she wrote is of high quality and the entries were interconnected, creating a system that can exist on its own," veteran Chinese Wikipedia John Yip told VICE World News. "Zhemao single-handedly invented a new way to undermine Wikipedia."</p> <p>Yifan was tipped off when he ran the silver mine story by Russian speakers and fact-checked Zhemao's references, only to find that the pages or versions of the books she cited did not exist. People he consulted also called out her lengthy entries on ancient conflicts between Slavic states, which could not be found in Russian historical records. "They were so rich in details they put English and Russian Wikipedia to shame," Yifan <a href="#">wrote on Zhihu</a>, a Chinese site similar to Quora, where he shared his discovery last month and caused a stir.</p> <p>The scale of the scam came to light after a group of volunteer editors and other Wikipedians, such as Yip, combed through her past contributions to nearly 300 articles.</p> <p>One of her longest articles was almost the length of "The Great Gatsby." With the formal, authoritative tone of an encyclopedia, it detailed three Tartar uprisings in the 17th century that left a lasting impact on Russia, complete with a map she made. In another entry, she shared rare images of ancient coins, which she claimed to have obtained from a Russian archaeological team.</p> <p>One article she tampered heavily with was on the deportation of Chinese in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and '30s. It was so well-written it was selected as a featured article and translated into other languages,</p>

including English, Arabic, and Russian, causing the damage to spill over to other language editions of Wikipedia.

Among the first users to interact with her, Yip almost couldn't believe himself when he learnt how she had tricked the system. Like many others, he was previously impressed with Zhemao's knowledge on the obscure topic and her dedication, as she made edits almost every other day.

"Her entries appeared comprehensive, with proper citations, but some were made up, while others had page numbers that did not add up," Yip said. For instance, she frequently quoted from "History of Russia From Earliest Times", a colossal work with 29 volumes by well-known Russian historian Sergei M. Soloviev. But the Chinese translation she cited turned out to be bogus.

Editors normally presume writers are contributing in good faith, said Yeh Youchia, a volunteer editor who plays the roles of a patroller and a rollbacker, and who helped contain the fallout.

"When surveying new content, we only check whether it is blatant plagiarism and if it has proper sources. She understood the format of Wikipedia very well and provided sources that were very difficult to verify," Yeh said.

The content is only one aspect of her invention.

To create an air of credibility, Zhemao described herself as the daughter of a Chinese diplomat stationed in Russia who married a Russian man and listed her academic credentials on her user profile, including a doctoral degree in world history from the Moscow State University. Recently, she added that she was a pacifist and attached a petition her husband supposedly signed in protest of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Though Zhemao occasionally feigned humility and expressed disgust with "online circle-jerking," the [investigation also found](#) that she controlled at least four sock puppets, alternative accounts she used to create an illusion of support. "Please don't call me boss, I am just an ordinary student," Zhemao wrote in reply to one of them.

With another sock puppet, she posed as a doctoral student in world history at Peking University who had studied in Russia, and claimed to know Zhemao in real life. Though one account, the Inquisitive Amateur, was active since 2010, the investigation suggested she only seized control of it in 2019.

Zhemao's convincing persona as a modest scholar won her the trust of the community.

"I thought she was a rare talent, as the site lacked writers knowledgeable in medieval Russia," Eric Liu, a history student involved with Wikipedia since 2015, told VICE World News. He awarded her with a Wikipedia barnstar earlier this year to thank her for her contributions.

"I deeply regret not realizing her nonsense and even gave her support. It feels like I was an accomplice to her scheme," Liu said. The incident dealt a heavy blow to the site's dwindling credibility and many users are now paranoid about potential fraud, he added.

As a punishment, Zhemao and her affiliated accounts were suspended permanently. Most of her articles were deleted based on community consensus. Some Wikipedians even wrote to experts, seeking help to separate the wheat from the chaff.

"Volunteers are continuing to review additional articles that may have been affected," a spokesperson of the Wikimedia Foundation told VICE World News in an email.

"Vandalism or other negative behavior can happen from time to time on Wikipedia, as is expected with any open, online platform that is available for everyone to contribute to. With that said, this specific type of behavior on Wikipedia is not common," they added.

So who is Zhemao in real life? She came clean in [an apology letter](#) issued on her Wikipedia account last month. She speaks neither English nor Russian and is a housewife with only a high school degree.

The hoax started with an innocuous intention. Unable to comprehend scholarly articles in their original language, she pieced sentences together with a translation tool and filled in the blanks with her own imagination. “As the saying goes, in order to defend a lie, you must tell more lies,” she wrote. Before long, they had accumulated into tens of thousands of characters, which she was reluctant to delete.

The alternative accounts were imaginary friends she “cosplayed” as she was bored and alone, given her husband was away most of the time and she didn’t have any friends. She also apologized to actual experts on Russia, whom she had attempted to cozy up to and later impersonated.

“The knowledge I have right now is not enough to make a living. In the future I will learn a craft, work conscientiously, and not do pointless things like this any more,” she added.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Twitter sues Musk over bid to exit deal</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/jul/12/twitter-sues-elon-musk-over-bid-to-exit-44bn-takeover-deal">https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/jul/12/twitter-sues-elon-musk-over-bid-to-exit-44bn-takeover-deal</a>
GIST	<p>Twitter sued Elon Musk on Tuesday to force him to complete his \$44bn takeover of the social media giant after he announced on Friday he would withdraw his bid.</p> <p>“Musk’s exit strategy is a model of hypocrisy,” the lawsuit said, accusing the billionaire of making “bad faith” arguments against Twitter and carrying out “public and misleading attacks” on the company.</p> <p>The suit has kicked off what could be a long legal saga regarding the failed merger. The Tesla CEO and richest man on Earth had reached a deal to buy Twitter on 25 April, offering to purchase all of the company’s shares for \$54.20 each, but he began to back out over allegations of “spam” accounts on the platform.</p> <p>“Musk entered into a binding merger agreement with Twitter, promising to use his best efforts to get the deal done,” according to the lawsuit. “Now, less than three months later, Musk refuses to honor his obligations to Twitter and its stockholders because the deal he signed no longer serves his personal interests.”</p> <p>Because the deal included a provision called a “specific performance clause”, the court could force Musk to buy the company as long as he has financing in place, which he claimed to have secured in May.</p> <p>Musk could be ordered to pay \$1bn for walking away, a penalty he indicated in a filing to the Securities and Exchange Commission he is seeking to evade. The SEC could levy additional penalties against Musk, including removing him from leadership of one or more of the several companies he leads, including Neuralink, Tesla, and SpaceX.</p> <p>The complaint details how Musk offered to buy Twitter at a relatively high price and backed out after a market slump led to a downturn in tech stocks. In order to successfully escape the deal without penalty, Musk would have to prove “material adverse effect” or breach of contract. “Musk had to try to conjure one of those,” the lawsuit states.</p> <p>To do so, Musk began to focus on the “spam bot” issue, the suit alleges. Twitter claimed spam accounts made up less than 5% of more than 200 million users but Musk insisted that the number was higher and accused Twitter of withholding information on the problem. Twitter revealed this month that it was suspending more than 1m spam accounts a day.</p> <p>Carl Tobias, a scholar at the University of Richmond School of Law, said the litigation could consume several months or longer, making a settlement likely.</p>

“The litigants will realize that it could be protracted, expensive and unproductive,” he said. “A protracted legal battle could be very expensive and time consuming, could distract both sides from moving on to more productive efforts to improve their current businesses and might reveal numerous embarrassing aspects of their business practices that could have detrimental effects on their reputations.”

Musk declared his takeover bid on 14 April, and Twitter’s board agreed after Musk confirmed a funding package for the deal that included \$21bn of his own money.

With the deal, Musk stood to take control of a social media network with more than 200 million users. An avid but critical user of the platform, he had vowed to push through various reforms, including relaxing its content restrictions, ridding the platform of fake and automated accounts and shifting away from its advertising-based revenue model.

Musk announced on 13 May that the deal was “on hold” while he awaited details supporting Twitter’s assertion on spam or fake accounts. He asserted the figure was 20% and said Twitter would need to show proof of the lower number for the purchase to go through.

Twitter denies this in the strongly worded complaint, saying Musk continued to tweet, falsely, that Twitter had “failed to cooperate” in providing the information “apparently in the belief that repeating a falsehood enough can make it true”.

The lawsuit details a number of tweets Musk sent “disparaging” the company, including a tweet directed at the Twitter CEO, Parag Agrawal, that contains a poop emoji and a number of memes.

“For Musk, it would seem, Twitter, the interests of its stockholders, the transaction Musk agreed to, and the court process to enforce it all constitute an elaborate joke,” the complaint said.

Musk seemed to respond to the lawsuit on Tuesday afternoon, tweeting: “Oh the irony lol.”

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## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	07/12 Twice-convicted terrorist reduced sentence
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.smh.com.au/national/victoria/cool-guy-terrorists-sentence-reduced-on-appeal-20220713-p5b1b9.html">https://www.smh.com.au/national/victoria/cool-guy-terrorists-sentence-reduced-on-appeal-20220713-p5b1b9.html</a>
GIST	<p>A twice-convicted terrorist who wanted to be the “cool guy” while plotting a terrorist attack in Melbourne will walk free from prison sooner than expected.</p> <p><a href="#">Ahmed Mohamed</a> was convicted in 2019 for conspiring to kill police and strangers in Federation Square on Christmas Day in 2016.</p> <p>He was also convicted of committing a terrorist act over the firebombing of a <a href="#">Melbourne mosque</a> weeks earlier.</p> <p>Mohamed was jailed for 38 years and ordered to serve at least 28 years and six months.</p> <p>That was reduced to 32 years with a minimum of 24 years before parole by Victoria’s Court of Appeal on Wednesday.</p> <p>He and his friends, Abdullah Chaarani, Ibrahim Abbas and Hamza Abbas, bought machetes, carried out reconnaissance and built practice bombs in preparation for their attack.</p>

Chaarani and Hatim Moukhaiber were also convicted over the mosque firebombing. The trio admitted the firebombing but denied it was terrorism.

Mohamed pleaded not guilty over the Federation Square plot but admitted after the jury convicted him that he was guilty.

He denounced the Islamic State terrorist group and his extremist views, telling Victoria's Supreme Court that he only participated in the attack after being nagged by ringleader Abbas.

"I felt like a chicken to say, 'No, I don't want to do this'," he said. "I wanted to be the hero of the group ... I wanted to be the cool guy."

Mohamed did not appeal either sentence handed to him for the Federation Square plot or the mosque attack but instead challenged the amount of cumulation.

He was sentenced separately for the terror offences, first receiving a 22-year sentence in July 2019 and then a 26-year sentence in December that year.

Mohamed was ordered to serve 16 years of the second sentence on top of the 22 years for the first.

The judges found the 38-year total sentence infringed the principle of totality, which requires judges to have regard for other facts including his prospects of rehabilitation.

The sentencing judge had been satisfied Mohamed renounced his extremist ideology and had reasonable prospects of rehabilitation, they said.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/13 Europol report: terrorism in the EU</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/europol-report-latest-situational-analysis-terrorism-in-eu">https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/europol-report-latest-situational-analysis-terrorism-in-eu</a>
GIST	<p>Published by Europol today, the <a href="#">European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2022 (TE-SAT)</a> provides the most comprehensive and up-to-date intelligence picture on <a href="#">terrorism</a> in the European Union.</p> <p>Europol's flagship TE-SAT 2022 report is based on quantitative data provided to Europol by EU Member States on terrorist attacks, arrests and court decisions issued for terrorist offences. Europol's partners also provided valuable qualitative information and assessments that enrich the findings of the report.</p> <p>Europol's Executive Director, Catherine De Bolle, said: "The findings of the TE-SAT 2022 confirm that terrorism still poses a real and present danger to the EU. While our joint work to disrupt and prevent attacks seems to be having a positive effect, lone actors associated with jihadist and right-wing violent extremism are still a concern for EU Member States and Europol. In a time of geopolitical shifts, the EU needs to continue more than ever its counter-terrorist measures. Europol will continue to work closely with its partners to meet the challenges ahead."</p> <p><b>Key findings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 15 completed, foiled and failed terrorist attacks were recorded in the EU in 2021. The four completed attacks included three jihadist terrorist attacks and one left-wing terrorist attack.</li><li>• EU law enforcement authorities arrested 388 suspects for terrorism-related offences in 2021. Of these, more than two thirds (260) were carried out following investigations into jihadist terrorism offences in Austria, France and Spain.</li><li>• Court proceedings concluded in 2021 resulted in 423 convictions for terrorist offences.</li><li>• Lone actors remain the primary perpetrators of terrorist and violent extremist attacks in Europe. However, attack plots involving several actors were also disrupted in 2021. Individuals carrying</li></ul>



	<p>out attacks alone have been associated mainly with jihadist terrorism and right-wing terrorism and violent extremism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2021, weaponry was used in the completed terrorist attacks that is relatively easy to source and does not require extensive skills for assemblage or use. Weapons used in attacks in the EU in 2021 included bladed weapons, vehicles (in ramming attacks) and improvised incendiary devices.</li> <li>• Terrorist propaganda disseminated online in 2021 has continued to reflect themes related to COVID-19. The increased amount of time spent online due to COVID-19 restrictions, amongst other reasons, constitutes a risk factor in vulnerable individuals' potential pathway to extremism.</li> <li>• Violent anti-COVID-19 and anti-government extremism, which is not affiliated with traditional violent extremist and terrorist activities, emerged in some Member States and non-EU countries. Such forms of violent extremism materialised in open threats, hateful messages spread online and, in some cases, the use of violence.</li> <li>• Geopolitical developments in key regions outside of the EU influence terrorist narratives and propaganda spread in Member States. The current terrorist threat for Member States appears not to have been directly affected by the Taliban's takeover of power in Afghanistan. However, it increased global attention on religiously motivated insurgencies and, thereby, provided jihadists affiliated with both al-Qaeda and the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) terrorist group opportunities to promote their own narratives.</li> </ul> <p>The TE-SAT elaborates in-depth on the following types of terrorism: jihadist terrorism, right-wing terrorism, left-wing and anarchist terrorism, ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism and other types of terrorism.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<i>To learn more, <a href="#">download the report</a>.</i>

<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/12 ICE removal: associated with terrorists</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/customs-immigration/ice-removes-noncitizen-associated-with-terrorists/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/customs-immigration/ice-removes-noncitizen-associated-with-terrorists/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) Denver Field Office removed a noncitizen associated with known terrorists from the United States on June 13 to Afghanistan via commercial air flights.</p> <p>Mohammed Wali Zazi, 66, was convicted of visa fraud, obstruction of justice, and conspiracy to obstruct justice in February 2012. Zazi entered the United States Aug. 8, 1990, and became a naturalized citizen, Oct. 23, 2007. A U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of New York convicted Zazi for conspiracy to obstruct justice, obstruction of justice, and visa fraud Feb. 10, 2012. He was sentenced to 54 months in federal prison.</p> <p>Zazi's naturalization was revoked Nov. 30, 2018, by the U.S. Magistrate Judge in the United States District Court for the District of Colorado, and his Certificate of Naturalization was cancelled. He was issued a Notice to Appear July 30, 2019, in Centennial, Colorado. The Immigration Judge in Denver denied any relief to Zazi and ordered him removed to Afghanistan, Feb. 4, 2022.</p> <p>ERO escorted Zazi on his removal from the United States, and Zazi arrived in Kabul, Afghanistan, via the Hamid Karzai International Airport.</p> <p>Zazi's son, Najibullah Zazi, is a member of al-Qa'ida and was convicted of conspiring to bomb the New York subway in 2009.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/12 US drone strike in Syria kills an ISIS leader</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/12/us-drone-strike-syria-kills-isis-leader-injures-an/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/12/us-drone-strike-syria-kills-isis-leader-injures-an/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	A senior leader of the Islamic State was killed Tuesday in a drone strike in northwest <a href="#">Syria</a> that also injured another ISIS leader, officials with <a href="#">U.S. Central Command</a> said.

	<p>Maher al-Agal, identified by <a href="#">Central Command</a> as the leader of ISIS in <a href="#">Syria</a>, was killed by a drone strike launched at a target outside Jindayris, <a href="#">Syria</a>.</p> <p>A “senior ISIS official closely associated with Maher” was seriously injured in the attack, according to a <a href="#">Central Command</a> spokesman.</p> <p>“This strike reaffirms [<a href="#">Central Command</a>’s] steadfast commitment to the region and the enduring defeat of ISIS,” command spokesman Army Col. Joe Buccino said in a statement. “The removal of these ISIS leaders will disrupt the terrorist organization’s ability to further plot and carry out global attacks.”</p> <p>The dead ISIS leader also was responsible for pursuing the development of terrorist networks outside Iraq and <a href="#">Syria</a>, <a href="#">Central Command</a> officials said.</p> <p>“ISIS continues to represent a threat to the U.S. and partners in the region,” Col. Buccino said.</p> <p>The U.S. has several hundred military troops in <a href="#">Syria</a> to help Syrian Democratic Forces who are fighting the Islamic State.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Mali’s famed manuscripts put to use</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/world/africa/timbuktu-mali-manuscripts.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/world/africa/timbuktu-mali-manuscripts.html</a>
GIST	<p>BAMAKO, Mali — In an air-conditioned room on a quiet tree-lined street in Mali’s capital, Bamako, three young men sat at desks with cameras mounted overhead, picked up one page of parchment at a time from tall stacks at their left, clicked the shutter button and then reached for the next page. Click. Flash. Repeat.</p> <p>One of the men, Amadou Koita, said he had been doing this work for five years. But the job is far from complete. Rooms full of metal trunks crammed with manuscripts await him.</p> <p>The documents are part of a trove of tens of thousands of old manuscripts — legal documents, copies of the Quran, scientific writings — that for centuries were conserved and passed down by the desert-dwelling families who owned them, or collected in libraries. Then, suddenly, they were in danger.</p> <p>In 2012, jihadists took over Timbuktu — today a small, sunbaked city in northern Mali, but once the most prominent of <a href="#">numerous centers of Islamic learning</a> in pre-colonial West Africa — and <a href="#">burned many manuscripts</a>, according to librarians and Timbuktu’s mayor at the time. In <a href="#">a dramatic rescue</a>, most of the documents that escaped the flames were smuggled out.</p> <p>Now, after years of careful preserving, cataloging, and digitizing, more than 40,000 pages from one of Timbuktu’s biggest libraries have been made available for anyone to explore <a href="#">on Google Arts &amp; Culture</a>.</p> <p>“Africans knew how to write before many outside Africa did,” said Andogoly Guindo, Mali’s minister of culture. “These manuscripts can throw light on part of Africa’s past.”</p> <p>But bringing them to a wider audience faces significant obstacles. For the most part they are undecipherable to people not educated in the West African Islamic tradition — those unable to read Arabic as well as African languages written in modified Arabic script, known as <a href="#">Ajami</a>. Only a tiny proportion of the documents are being translated because there are not many scholars with the skills to do it.</p> <p>“There’s been very very little, marginal work on excavating the content of the manuscripts,” said <a href="#">Abdulbasit Kassim</a>, a historian of West and Central Africa who specializes in manuscripts. “What exactly can the manuscripts tell us about African history? What can they tell us beyond the different phases of African history, from spirituality to the field of science, to medicine, mathematics, astronomy, astrology, logic, philosophy, esoteric sciences?”</p>

West Africa's wealth of manuscripts provide evidence of extensive written traditions in the continent stretching back centuries — in contrast to past claims by Western colonialists and scholars who characterized African societies as oral rather than literate ones.

The manuscripts from Timbuktu show that the city's scholars had found that the earth revolved around the sun — having the insight at around the same time Galileo did — and used mathematics far earlier than scientists in other parts of the world, said Cynthia Schneider, co-director of the [Timbuktu Renaissance initiative](#), which recently organized an exuberant event in Bamako, ending with a dance party, to launch the Google project.

The scholars also [produced millions of pages](#) of jurisprudence, and writings on the Prophet Muhammad, and on mysticism, she said.

But for modern purposes, the most useful portion of the Timbuktu manuscripts — which also contain travel diaries, correspondence and sex tips — might be those on how to govern justly, corruption-busting techniques and conflict resolution.

“Each problem has a solution in the manuscripts,” said Abdel Kader Haidara, a [librarian who helped coordinate the rescue](#) of the documents from Timbuktu. He pulled down his mask, revealing a bounteous mustache, downed his glass of attaya — sweet, strong tea — and put the mask back. “We have to use them.”

Mr. Haidara founded SAVAMA-DCI, a nongovernmental organization dedicated to the preservation of the Timbuktu manuscripts, which collaborated with Google on [the project](#). The Bamako offices of the group house some of the manuscripts in specially made boxes to protect their leather bindings and fragile pages of calligraphy and illustrations, often of tiny, colorful flowers.

Segou, a river city in south-central Mali, was another center of learning and scholarship in the region. It housed the library of Omar Tall, a scholar, politician and military leader, born in the 1790s, whose library was seized by French colonial authorities and taken to Paris.

A few months ago in Segou, in the dry season, dozens of Muslim scholars and local personalities gathered in a high-roofed hall as Thierno Bashir Tall, a descendant of Omar Tall, read from a copy of a text preserved in several manuscripts. It was as if the scholar was speaking to them down the centuries. Fans whirled and prayer beads softly clacked as they listened.

Mr. Tall looked up from the copy of the manuscript, set down in a bold Arabic script. “Look at the old manuscripts our ancestors left us,” he said, smiling.

In the text, the scholar, using religious arguments, tried to resolve a conflict between the leaders of the Borno and Sokoto empires, one that shaped West Africa. Five translators rendered the version they were examining into French and Arabic, using three different manuscript copies.

The 200-year-old story was depressingly familiar. Religious leaders locked in power struggles. Muslims with divergent allegiances trading insults. Believers attacking, even killing each other.

Modern Mali is plagued by troubles of this kind too; a decade of fighting between jihadists and a mosaic of national and international military forces has often seen civilians caught in the middle.

Omar Tall composed his tract as he walked through the Sahara, a journey “so hard and tiring,” he wrote, made harder by his wife and brother being gravely ill. He cited Quranic verses, hadiths — sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad — and commentaries by Muslim scholars, all condemning clashes between believers.

The Segou scholars looked to his experience for inspiration on ending the modern conflict.

	<p>“What Sheikh Omar Tall did to bring peace to Borno and Sokoto — people from Segou can use these same tactics to talk to people from Mopti, and Bandiagara, and so on,” his descendant said, referring to areas of Mali, and switching between French and Bambara, the country’s most widely spoken language. “Without peace there is no development.”</p> <p>His audience listened, some of the robed men wrapping woolen scarves tighter despite the 100-degree heat.</p> <p>The city of Segou has mostly escaped the conflict that has torn through Mali in the past decade, but armed groups and <a href="#">abusive soldiers have wreaked devastation</a> on nearby vulnerable towns and hamlets, and people in the city are fed up.</p> <p>“They have to sit and talk,” said Malick Dara, who opened the Peace and Reconciliation Café so that people from different communities could do just that while enjoying plates of liver and tomatoes.</p> <p>Back in the hall, many audience members agreed that the manuscripts could help bring peace, but some pointed out that translations into languages spoken by more Malians, like Bambara, would be more useful than French.</p> <p>Others thought the guest list for the reading should have been expanded.</p> <p>“You should invite the many villages living under jihadists,” said one, Oumar Cissé. “Listening to this would heal their hearts.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Report: UK soldiers killed Afghan detainees</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/report-uk-soldiers-killed-dozens-afghan-detainees-86661089">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/report-uk-soldiers-killed-dozens-afghan-detainees-86661089</a>
GIST	<p>LONDON -- A BBC <a href="#">investigation</a> alleged Tuesday that British special forces killed dozens of detainees in suspicious circumstances during counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan a decade ago.</p> <p>Citing newly obtained military documents, the broadcaster alleged that one SAS unit may have unlawfully killed 54 people in the southern Helmand province in 2010 to 2011. It also alleged that the former head of U.K. special forces knew about the alleged killings, but didn't pass on the evidence to a murder inquiry.</p> <p>The Ministry of Defense said the report “jumps to unjustified conclusions from allegations that have already been fully investigated.”</p> <p>The ministry said two independent investigations have looked into the conduct of British forces in Afghanistan and that neither found sufficient evidence to prosecute.</p> <p>“Insinuating otherwise is irresponsible, incorrect and puts our brave Armed Forces personnel at risk both in the field and reputationally,” it said in a statement.</p> <p>“The Ministry of Defense of course stands open to considering any new evidence, there would be no obstruction,” it added.</p> <p>British forces were deployed to Afghanistan since 2001 as part of a NATO-led international coalition after the Sept. 11 attacks. Thousands of British troops were sent to Helmand from 2006 to help with providing security for reconstruction projects, but they were soon drawn into combat operations.</p> <p>The BBC investigation focused on one six-month deployment by an SAS squadron that operated in Helmand from late 2010. It said the unit carried out “kill or capture” raids to detain Taliban commanders and disrupt bomb-making networks.</p> <p>The investigation reported that intelligence flaws meant innocent civilians were sometimes caught up in the operations.</p>

Citing operational reports detailing the special forces' accounts of night raids, the BBC said it found “a pattern” of similar reports of Afghan men being shot dead because they pulled out weapons after they were detained.

Officials were concerned that more people were killed than weapons were reportedly recovered during some raids — suggesting the SAS soldiers were shooting unarmed people, the report said.

The report said internal emails showed that senior officials were concerned but failed to report the suspicions to military police.

Opposition lawmaker John Healey described the allegations as “deeply disturbing,” and urged Defense Secretary Ben Wallace to explain to Parliament what action he would take to verify the claims.

The last U.K. forces and their NATO allies withdrew from Afghanistan last summer, nearly 20 years after the first Western soldiers were deployed there.

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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	07/12 Heathrow caps daily passenger numbers
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-travel-ffe82f36c91ece6004554dc8c2ad09ee">https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-travel-ffe82f36c91ece6004554dc8c2ad09ee</a>
GIST	<p>LONDON (AP) — London’s Heathrow Airport is capping daily passenger numbers for the summer and telling airlines to stop selling tickets as it steps up efforts to quell travel chaos caused by soaring travel demand and staff shortages.</p> <p>Britain’s busiest airport said Tuesday that it’s setting a limit of 100,000 passengers that it can handle each day through Sept. 11. The restriction is likely to result in more canceled flights even after airlines already slashed thousands of flights from their summer schedules.</p> <p>U.K. aviation authorities demanded that airlines ensure they can operate without disruption over the summer, with carriers not punished for not using their valuable takeoff and landing slots. They were responding to chaotic airport scenes as passengers complained about long lineups at security, lost luggage and lengthy flight delays.</p> <p>Even with that allowance, Heathrow, which had warned a day earlier that it may ask airlines to cut flights further, said it still expected more passengers than airport ground staff could handle.</p> <p>“Some airlines have taken significant action, but others have not, and we believe that further action is needed now to ensure passengers have a safe and reliable journey,” Heathrow CEO John Holland-Kaye said in an open letter to passengers.</p> <p>Airlines are expected to operate flights over the summer with an overall daily capacity of 104,000 seats, or 4,000 more than Heathrow can handle, the airport said. Only about 1,500 of the 4,000 extra daily seats have been sold to passengers.</p> <p>“So we are asking our airline partners to stop selling summer tickets to limit the impact on passengers,” Holland-Kaye said.</p> <p>British Airways, the airline with the biggest presence at Heathrow, has already cut 11% of its scheduled flights between April and October. It didn’t respond to a request for comment Tuesday on whether it would cancel more.</p>

<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<p>Virgin Atlantic, which is also based at Heathrow, said it's "ready to deliver its full schedule this summer" but supported the airport's "proactive measures" to reduce disruption, as long they don't have an outsized impact on its home carriers.</p> <p>Other European airports have imposed similar caps this summer. London's Gatwick has limited daily flight numbers, while Amsterdam's Schiphol cut its maximum daily passenger numbers by 13,500.</p> <p>Booming demand for summer travel after two years of COVID-19 travel restrictions have overwhelmed European airlines and airports that had laid off tens of thousands of pilots, cabin crew, check-in staff, ground crew and baggage handlers amid the depths of the pandemic.</p> <p>Heathrow has said it started a recruiting drive in November and expects security staffing to be back to pre-pandemic levels by the end of July.</p> <p>"However, there are some critical functions in the airport which are still significantly under-resourced, in particular ground handlers, who are contracted by airlines to provide check-in staff, load and unload bags and turnaround aircraft," making it a "significant constraint" to overall capacity, Holland-Kaye said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/12 Study: cause of homelessness</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/cause-of-homelessness-its-not-drugs-or-mental-illness-researchers-say/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/cause-of-homelessness-its-not-drugs-or-mental-illness-researchers-say/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>SAN DIEGO — Ask just about anyone for their thoughts on what causes homelessness, and you will likely hear drug addiction, mental illness, alcoholism and poverty.</p> <p>A pair of researchers, however, looked at those issues across the country and found they occur everywhere. What does vary greatly around the country, they found, is the availability of affordable housing.</p> <p>In their book <a href="#">“Homelessness is a Housing Problem,”</a> University of California Press, co-authors Clayton Page Aldern and Gregg Colburn looked at various contributing issues of homelessness, including mental illness and addiction, and looked at the per capita rate of homelessness around the country. By looking at the rate of homeless per 1,000 people, they found communities with the highest housing costs had some of the highest rates of homelessness, something that might be overlooked when looking at just the overall raw number of homeless people.</p> <p>As an example, the 2019 count of people in shelters and on the street found a homeless population of 56,000 in Los Angeles County, 11,200 in King County, Washington, 9,700 in Santa Clara County and 4,000 in Multnomah County in Oregon. The homeless populations became much more similar when looking at per capita rates, with Los Angeles having six homeless people for every 1,000 residents and the other three, smaller counties having five homeless people for every 1,000.</p> <p>What they had in common was a lack of affordable housing.</p> <p>San Diego County had about 2.5 homeless people for every 1,000 residents, which was about the average per capita rate in the 2019 count. Aldern pointed out that the San Diego number would be greater if it included just the metropolitan area rather than the entire county.</p> <p>Aldern, a data scientist and policy analyst in Seattle, and Colburn, an assistant professor of real estate at the University of Washington's College of Built Environments, said they are not suggesting that mental illness, addictions and other issues are not contributing factors to homelessness.</p> <p>“That’s certainly not the point of the book,” Colburn said. “But I firmly believe that we can’t treat our way out of this problem. You could fix all the addiction in San Diego right now and you’d still have a</p>



problem with homelessness because there just aren't places for people to go who have lower levels of income."

Lisa Jones, executive vice president of strategic initiatives at the San Diego Housing Commission, said she has not read the book but does see a connection between housing and homelessness.

"High-cost rental markets that far outstrip area median incomes — and push renters into paying more than 50 percent of their income toward rent — certainly are a significant contributing factor to making households at high risk of experiencing homelessness," she wrote in an email.

"When households do experience homelessness, those factors make it even harder for them to exit homelessness by renting in the private rental market," Jones continued. "We also know that the longer a household experiences homelessness, the more likely other key quality-of-life factors will be affected, such as physical and mental well-being.

"We need to continue to strive to build a homelessness response system that has a diverse spectrum of resources to meet a household's unique needs," she concluded. "At the same time, we need to continue to support the efforts of policy makers at local, state and national levels to increase affordable housing development and rental assistance opportunities, streamline application processes, and reduce construction costs to increase production."

In San Diego, nonprofits and local government agencies have made strides to create more housing. The city of San Diego purchased [two extended-stay hotels](#) in 2020 to provide homes for 400 people, and earlier this year Father Joe's Villages open [St. Teresa of Calcutta Villa](#) to provide homes for 400 more people.

More permanent, affordable housing is planned throughout the county, but the need remains great. The city of San Diego's [Community Action Plan on Homelessness](#) from 2019 called for significant investment in permanent solutions rather than shelters, with a recommendation to build 5,400 units, including 3,500 units of permanent supportive housing over 10 years.

The new projects would reverse a trend over the past decade that showed San Diego losing thousands of units of low-income housing, including 9,290 single-room occupancy hotels and 1,500 low-income rental units that were converted to condominiums, according to a 2016 article in [The San Diego Union-Tribune](#).

Colburn said he was motivated to research the subject after attending meetings with political and civic leaders in Seattle and feeling they did not grasp the true cause of homelessness, which resulted in responses he called scattershot.

"One day we were talking about drugs, and one day we were talking about rent, and one day we were talking about mental health, and one day we were talking about poverty, and I thought that was counterproductive," he said.

Colburn said it is true that people who are poor, addicted or mentally ill are more likely to experience homelessness, but a disproportionate number of people with those conditions is not the cause of higher rates of homelessness in some areas.

"We're not trying to dispute that these individual vulnerabilities matter," he said. "They certainly do. But the point is, there are people who are addicted and mentally ill in Chicago, and Chicago has one-fifth the homelessness of Seattle and San Francisco. So what's going on here? The point is these individual vulnerabilities interact with housing markets to produce homelessness."

The researchers looked at homelessness in West Virginia and Arkansas, which were hit hard by the opioid epidemic, and found the homeless rate was low. Housing prices in those states also are lower than in many cities with higher homeless rates, Colburn said.

Poverty also is a contributing factor of homelessness, but the researchers found areas with high poverty rates don't necessarily have high homelessness rates if housing costs are lower. As an example, Colburn said Detroit is one of the most impoverished cities in the country, but it has one-fifth the homelessness of West Coast cities on a per capita basis.

"The point is, if you are poor, if you are addicted, if you are mentally ill in an expensive West Coast city like San Diego, you're far more likely to experience homelessness," he said. "And that issue explains why Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego have much, much higher rates of homelessness than Miami, or Dallas or Phoenix, for example."

Colburn said he and Aldern studied data from the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to understand population growth, incomes, rates of poverty, mobility, mental health and addictions in different areas.

"Pretty soon it became very clear that rental costs and vacancy rates were by far the biggest predictor of rates of homelessness in a community," Colburn said. "It's not the only factor. There are all sorts of complicated phenomenon, but it's a far more convincing phenomenon than anything else."

Colburn said they also attempted to dispel what they said are myths about homelessness, such as that it is higher in cities with Democratic mayors. In reality, most major cities have Democrats as mayor, but that also includes cities like Detroit with smaller homeless populations, he said.

They also looked at the claim that homeless people move to areas with greater public assistance, which they judged by comparing the state variations in the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. They found that states that provided more dollars in the program did not have higher rates of homelessness.

The researchers also cited studies on mobility that found people with low incomes are less likely to move to another area because moving is difficult and expensive.

"The fundamental point is, if we correctly diagnosed this problem as a structural problem, which I think it is, then we need structural solutions," Colburn said. "We need a significant commitment at all levels of government and the private sector to ensure we have an adequate supply of housing that's affordable to people. And if we don't do that, I'm highly, highly confident that we will not put a dent of this problem of homelessness."

Colburn said housing must be a part of the conversation when addressing homelessness, and that conversation can be discouraging because it will take years and be a costly investment to create enough affordable housing to make a difference.

"It's not like just flipping a light switch," he said. "That's why a lot of times this is a scary message to people, because it suggests we've got a long battle ahead of us."

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HEADLINE	07/12 Timbers 17 <sup>th</sup> -century shipwreck OR coast
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/us/beeswax-shipwreck-oregon.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/us/beeswax-shipwreck-oregon.html</a>
GIST	<p>In July 1693, a large Spanish galleon set sail from the Philippines with a full cargo load of Asian luxury goods, including silk, porcelain and beeswax. The ship was destined for Acapulco, Mexico, when it veered off course and vanished.</p> <p>The ship's fate has been the subject of a mystery that endured for more than 300 years along the coast of what is now northern Oregon. Pieces of blue-and-white porcelain and beeswax with Spanish markings have long washed ashore there, offering tantalizing clues to beachcombers and researchers that a shipwreck was somewhere nearby.</p>

Last month, a team of maritime archaeologists painstakingly recovered more than a dozen timbers from sea caves along the coast that researchers said were almost certainly pieces of the galleon that disappeared, the Santo Cristo de Burgos. The researchers said it was the first time that remnants of a Manila galleon had ever been recovered in North America.

“This ship comes from the time in which the global economy was rising,” said Jim P. Delgado, senior vice president of [SEARCH Inc.](#), a cultural resource management firm that was brought in to coordinate the retrieval of the timbers. “It was the beginning of the modern world that we live in today.”

The discovery was remarkable, the archaeologists said, not least because the washing-machine effect of pounding waves and tide changes inside a sea cave are hardly ideal conditions for preserving timber. But the water off the Oregon coast has less salt than other parts of the Pacific Ocean, they said, and the timber was buried beneath a layer of sediment from a tsunami that struck the coast after an earthquake in 1700. These conditions left the timbers in remarkably good shape.

The recovery of the first tangible pieces of the Beeswax Wreck, as the shipwreck came to be known, is the culmination of an effort that dates to 2006, when Scott Williams, an archaeologist with the Washington State Department of Transportation, first heard about the mysterious Spanish galleon from two friends.

Mr. Williams’s fascination with the wreck eventually led him and other researchers to establish [the Maritime Archaeological Society](#). The volunteer group studied the porcelain shards and beeswax blocks that had been harvested from the shoreline over the decades and determined that the porcelain was Chinese and that the beeswax had Spanish markings. The group concluded that the Beeswax Wreck had to be one of two Manila galleons that went missing between 1650 and 1750: the Santo Cristo de Burgos, which was lost in 1693, or the San Francisco Xavier, which disappeared in 1705.

Initially, the archaeologists believed it was the San Francisco Xavier they were looking for. In 1700, a 9.0-magnitude earthquake struck the West Coast, triggering an enormous tsunami that would have destroyed anything in its path — including any remnants of the Santo Cristo de Burgos.

However, a geological study later established that the area they were searching, where the Nehalem River meets the Pacific, was within a sediment layer left by the tsunami, meaning the vessel had to have been there when it hit. The San Francisco Xavier was ruled out.

But there was a problem: Numerous records claimed that the Santo Cristo de Burgos burned in the middle of the ocean. The Maritime Archaeological Society raised money for an extensive search of Spain’s naval archives, which revealed that the ship had simply vanished without a trace.

That supported the researchers’ hunch that pieces of the ship were still offshore somewhere. Since 2012, the society has been taking risky dives, using sonar and underwater detectors to try to find any sign of the wreckage.

This is where a commercial fisherman named Craig Andes enters the picture. The Beeswax Wreck is said to have inspired Steven Spielberg’s story for “The Goonies,” a 1985 film about a group of kids who search the Oregon coast for treasure from a 17th-century pirate ship. It was one of Mr. Andes’s favorite movies when he was growing up, so when he moved to Oregon as a boy, he became obsessed with the idea of finding treasure just like the kids in the film. Eventually, Mr. Andes was inspired to learn more about the Beeswax Wreck.

When Mr. Andes, now 49, learned that the Maritime Archaeological Society was searching for the wreck, he got in touch with Mr. Williams, and the two began swapping information.

In late 2019, Mr. Andes was walking along the rocky beach when something caught his eye: wooden timbers protruding from the water, stuck in a cave. It didn’t look like driftwood to him.

Excited, Mr. Andes called Mr. Williams, who was skeptical.

“I said to him, ‘It can’t be from the shipwreck; wood does not preserve for 300 years in the tidal zone,’” Mr. Williams recalled.

But Mr. Andes was insistent. The two retrieved a small piece of the wood and sent it to a lab to settle the debate.

The lab determined that the wood was tropical hardwood from Asia or South America — hardly regular driftwood. Radiocarbon dating showed that it could be nearly 300 years old.

The group hatched a plan to retrieve the timbers. It wouldn’t be easy, as the wood was trapped inside dangerous sea caves that belonged to the Oregon State Parks. The proper permits and permissions would need to be obtained.

The Maritime Archaeological Society enlisted Mr. Delgado and his firm to coordinate the retrieval. The project was funded in part by a grant from the [National Geographic Society](#).

After two years of planning — a timeline that included delays tied to the coronavirus pandemic — about two dozen people scattered along the shore around sunrise on June 13, with officials from the parks department and various public safety agencies joining the researchers. The team would have about 90 minutes to pull off their delicately choreographed mission before the tides became too high to enter the caves safely.

First, it would take upward of 30 minutes to traverse enormous rocks covered in slick kelp, said Stacy Scott, a coastal region archaeologist with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, who helped plan the retrieval.

Once the team members reached the caves, they had to be mindful to not let the waves toss them into the rocks. Then, the group had to carefully dislodge the timbers, the largest of which was 7.5 feet long and weighed more than 300 pounds. The only way to get it out was to wrap life vests around it and float it out on Jet Skis toward a team of firefighters, who then wrestled it onto a backboard that could be dragged to shore.

“We finally have the missing piece,” Ms. Scott said. “It was humbling to know that I was involved in something that likely inspired one of my favorite childhood movies, but also such a significant historical event.”

The 16 timbers, in various shapes and sizes, were taken to the [Columbia River Maritime Museum](#) in Astoria, Ore., where they will be properly dried out and preserved. Testing will determine the type of wood, and the archaeologists hope they will even be able to figure out what part of the ship the timbers are from. Manila galleon experts from around the world will be given access to the information, Mr. Williams said, with the hope that they might help solve the puzzle.

There is a small chance the timbers might be from a different shipwreck. But Mr. Williams said he had no doubt that he and his team had brought ashore the first known pieces of the fabled Beeswax Wreck.

“You’ve got a log, with Asian tropical hardwood that washed ashore about 300 years ago, with square sides and spike holes,” he said. “We are convinced it’s from that shipwreck.”

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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	07/12 NIST updates NSRL for crime investigations
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220712-updated-software-reference-library-will-aid-in-criminal-investigations">https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220712-updated-software-reference-library-will-aid-in-criminal-investigations</a>
GIST	<p>A recent update to a publicly downloadable database maintained by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will make it easier to sift through computers, cellphones and other electronic equipment seized in police raids, potentially helping law enforcement catch sexual predators and other criminals.</p> <p>The database, called the <a href="#">National Software Reference Library (NSRL)</a>, plays a frequent role in criminal investigations involving electronic files, which can be evidence of wrongdoing. In the first major update to the NSRL in two decades, NIST has increased the number and type of records in the database to reflect the widening variety of software files that law enforcement might encounter on a device. The agency has also changed the format of the records to make the NSRL more searchable.</p> <p>“There are hardly any major crimes that don’t have connections to digital technology, because criminals use cellphones,” said Doug White, a NIST computer scientist who helps maintain the NSRL. “Only some of the data on a phone or other device might be relevant to an investigation, though. The update should make it easier for police to separate the wheat from the chaff.”</p> <p>Both criminal and civil investigations frequently involve digital evidence in the form of software and files from seized computers or cellphones. Investigators need a way to filter out the large quantities of data that are irrelevant to the investigation so they can focus attention on finding relevant evidence.</p> <p>“Let’s say you’ve got a computer that might contain incriminating photos or financial records, but it also has a few video games,” White said. “Games often come with a lot of graphics files. You want to run your investigation as quickly and efficiently as possible, so what you need is a way to get rid of all the video game images. Then you can run your more computationally expensive analysis on the files that remain.”</p> <p>The update comes at a time when investigators must contend with a rapidly expanding universe of software, most of which produces numerous files that are stored in memory. Each of these files can be identified by a sort of electronic fingerprint called a hash, which is the key to the sifting process. The sophistication of the sifting process can vary depending on the type of investigation being performed.</p> <p>The NSRL’s reference dataset doubled in size from half a billion hash records in August of 2019 to more than a billion in March 2022, and White says he anticipates its rapid growth to continue.</p> <p>This growth makes the NSRL a vitally important tool for digital forensics labs, which specialize in this sort of file review. Such work has become a crucial part of investigations: There are about 11,000 digital forensics labs in the United States (compared with about 400 crime labs). While digital evidence plays a role in many types of crime, it is particularly useful for <a href="#">catching child predators</a>, who often have sexual abuse imagery stored in a phone or computer’s memory.</p> <p>While the number of NSRL entries is growing both numerically and by file type — White anticipates adding entries from Internet of Things (IoT) devices such as smart speakers in the near future — the recent update to the database should help investigators handle the burden. The previous 2.0 version, which dates back 20 years, offered its hashes as basic text files that could be imported into a spreadsheet. Searching the list was possible but cumbersome compared with modern search engine functions. The update, which is NSRL version 3.0, uses the SQLite format, which makes it easier for users to create custom filters to sort through files and find what they need for a particular investigation.</p> <p>Another advantage is that the NSRL managers will be able to distribute future changes to the dataset as comparatively small updates rather than sending out the entire dataset anew, saving time and effort for users. White also said the NSRL would continue to be available in its old format for the benefit of users who may need time to adjust to the changes.</p>

	“We will continue to publish the dataset in both the 2.0 and 3.0 formats through December 2022,” White said. “After that, there is a relatively easy query that users can run to generate the 2.0 dataset if it proves necessary.”
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	The dataset and more information on the update are <a href="#">available via the NIST website</a> .

HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Mexico crime groups trend: hide bodies</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/z34x88/mexico-dead-25-bodies-los-negritos-natural-reserve">https://www.vice.com/en/article/z34x88/mexico-dead-25-bodies-los-negritos-natural-reserve</a>
GIST	<p>At least 25 bodies have been found buried in an abandoned thermal water park in Western Mexico, on the border between two states troubled by drug-related violence.</p> <p>The remains were found on June 11 at the Los Negritos natural reserve in Michoacán, after activists and families looking for missing loved ones blocked a main highway to pressure local authorities to search for bodies inside the park, according to <a href="#">local press reports</a>.</p> <p>Neither authorities nor activists blamed a particular cartel for the mass grave, but over the past two years, the region between Jalisco and Michoacán has seen a violent war between two factions of the New Generation Jalisco Cartel (CJNG).</p> <p>The excavation work in Los Negritos began on June 22 with the help of activists and the public as well as state and federal authorities. Authorities from Michoacán and Mexico’s Federal Attorney General’s Office are still searching the area for more bodies, and activists have said that there <a href="#">could be as many as 500</a> people buried on the site, which would make it the largest mass grave found in Mexico’s history.</p> <p>Only eight of the bodies, six men and two women, have been identified so far, mainly by clothing or dental records, <a href="#">according to Michoacán’s General Attorney's office</a>.</p> <p>Some victims died from gunshot wounds, others from mutilation and one from head trauma, according to the government. The age of the victims ranges between 16 and 60 years old, officials said.</p> <p>“From what we know there could be as many as 500 bodies,” Iris del Rocío Macías, founder of the missing persons search organization ‘Looking for Angels’, told VICE World News. “Organized crime has operated in this area for more than a decade.”</p> <p>Some worry that the remains of people found in the latest mass grave to be discovered in Mexico could be the victims of an incident that took place earlier this year in town of San José de García, some 60 kilometers from where the graveyard was discovered. In February, <a href="#">armed gunmen burst into a funeral</a> in San José de García, lined mourners up against a wall, and executed a reported 17 people. After the slaughter, the aggressors removed the bodies.</p> <p>“The bodies they took from San José [de García] funeral could very well be here,” an activist who asked to remain anonymous said. “They used this park as a dump for their enemies because it is well hidden but also because of the spring waters...the bodies dissolve with the heat.”</p> <p>The Los Negritos park attracted families and tourists with its natural acidic, hot waters surrounded by volcanic rocks. But when violence started ramping in the region, visitors to the park dried up and it closed.</p> <p>In 2017 <a href="#">a mass grave with 300 bodies</a> was found in Veracruz, which at that time was the largest ever found in Mexico. In March this year, <a href="#">another mass grave containing 21 bodies</a> was found in the northern state of Sonora.</p> <p>The number of people reported missing in Mexico is at a record high of 100,000, according to <a href="#">official figures</a>. Government data, which goes back to 1964, shows that almost all the disappearances have occurred since 2007, when then-President Felipe Calderón launched the “war on drugs” - a government</p>



crackdown on organized crime and drug-trafficking. The [United Nations has called](#) the number of people missing in Mexico "a human tragedy of enormous proportions".

This week's morbid discovery in Los Negritos is a nod to a growing trend among organized crime groups in Mexico, who are hiding the bodies of their victims rather than killing and leaving them in public to be found by officials. The strategy brings down homicide numbers, but could mean that killings are still on the rise.

Mexico's homicide rates have been steadily dropping since last year, [according to official figures](#), but incidents where killers take their victim's bodies are rising. Last month [two Jesuit priests were murdered](#) inside a church in the northern state of Chihuahua along with a tourist guide who tried to hide from the killer inside the church. The bodies of the three were taken from the killing scene and later found some 200 km north.

Authorities are still searching the park for more bodies. If what activists believe is true, this could be the biggest clandestine grave in Mexican modern history.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Uvalde police wait while gunman fires</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/07/12/uvalde-police-hallway-footage/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/07/12/uvalde-police-hallway-footage/</a>
GIST	<p>Newly available video obtained by the Austin American-Statesman shows a gunman walking into a Uvalde, Tex., elementary school undeterred on May 24, only to later fire at unseen targets as police milled about during the massacre in which 21 people would die.</p> <p>The footage offered a dramatic view of what authorities had already confirmed: that more and more officers gathered in the school building's hallways as time went on, but did not move en masse to take down the gunman. The new video shows one officer stopping to squirt sanitizer on his hand; at another time, two fist-bump one another.</p> <p>In <a href="#">the video</a>, which the newspaper published Tuesday afternoon, Salvador Ramos is shown crashing his truck near Robb Elementary School, dust billowing behind his vehicle. Two men approach the crash before running away. One trips, falls and roll over on the pavement.</p> <p>The next seconds shift to a panicked woman calling 911. She is not identified in the footage.</p> <p>"The kids are running," she screams before a caption says Ramos fired at the school from its parking lot. The terror rises in her voice as she yells at children to get into their classrooms.</p> <p>Cellphone video then shows Ramos, 18, entering the school with his rifle, looking around before he exits the frame. As he turns the hall, a child peers around the corner and sees Ramos, who unleashes countless rounds off-camera. The frightened child runs back to where he came from, exiting the frame.</p> <p>The American-Statesman reported that Ramos fired his weapon for 2½ minutes in two classrooms. Authorities have stated that Ramos fired more than 100 rounds.</p> <p>About three minutes later, according to the video, police enter the school. Some are seen racing toward the gunman, and others look around the corner.</p> <p>Officers point to one another, seemingly signaling to each other where to stand before more gunfire booms throughout the school's hall.</p> <p>Police who ran toward the gunman retreat back to where the officers entered. Thirty-one minutes later, according to the video's time stamp, more heavily armed officers enter the scene, some with heavy weapons and shields.</p>

Later still, four more shots are heard as armed officers continue to huddle and take cover away from the action, staying close to where Ramos entered the school. Commands are called out as a larger group of officers file down the hallway with weapons drawn. One officer is seen entering the camera from the left and applying the hand sanitizer shortly before more gunfire blares, which the paper attributes to authorities killing Ramos after entering a classroom.

Ramos, 18, was in the school for more than an hour before police fatally shot him. He killed 19 children and two teachers.

The Texas House committee investigating the police response told Uvalde families that they would get a first look this weekend at the 77-minute video from the fish-eye camera inside the school. The three-person committee's report is expected soon. The video is one of several pieces of evidence it has reviewed.

After the newspaper published the footage, Texas Department of Public Safety Director Steven C. McCraw said he was "deeply disappointed this video was released before all of the families who were impacted that day and the community of Uvalde had the opportunity to view it."

"Those most affected should have been among the first to see it," McCraw said. "DPS will not be providing the video at this time."

Gloria Cazares, whose daughter Jacklyn Cazares was killed in the shooting, urged her Facebook friends to "not share that video that was leaked!"

"This is the opposite of what the families wanted!!!! If you are a true friend please do not share it, I don't want to see it in my feed nor do I want to be tagged on any of the news stations that are sharing it," she wrote. "Our hearts are shattered all over again!"

At a Uvalde City Council meeting Tuesday evening, Mayor Don McLaughlin called the release "chickensh--."

"There was no reason for these families to have to see that," McLaughlin said. "Whether it was released by DPS or whoever, this was wrong to do it this way."

At the meeting, Uvalde County Commissioner Ronald Garza said the county commission passed a resolution to request that the Texas legislature call a special session to raise the minimum age to purchase an assault weapon. He then urged the city to do the same. McLaughlin said he would put it on the council's agenda.

State Sen. Roland Gutierrez (D), who represents Uvalde and has been critical of the investigation, was in Washington on Tuesday with families who were at the Capitol to speak to lawmakers. When they learned that the hallway video would be released imminently, one family asked Gutierrez to try to stop it. He said he could not.

"I'm just disappointed right now, disappointed in government," Gutierrez said. "You tell families that you are going to distribute this in a certain way, but someone in government decided to leak. These families have been on an emotional roller coaster and been promised so much, and it hasn't happened."

Gutierrez said he's dismayed by the piecemeal disclosure of information by government and investigating officials. Instead of helping the community understand what happened, he said, the way details have been released has caused more harm.

"Someone in government gave it to the media before the families had a chance to deal with it and prepare themselves for this highly sensitive material," he said. "I don't know who is calling the shots, but it is so disturbing what they are doing to these families. It's high time this governor demand some accountability from his Department of Public Safety."

Also on Tuesday, ABC affiliate KVUE released [a video](#) containing more than an hour of footage from the school.

Researchers from the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Center at Texas State University, which specializes in active-shooter training, found tactical errors and potential breaches of protocol in a review of the police response to the deadliest school shooting in the United States in nearly a decade.

Police were carrying radios that would not communicate. Classroom doors had locks that could not be secured from inside. And the school district's police chief, Pedro "Pete" Arredondo, made error after error throughout the catastrophe, according to testimony from McCraw, the Texas Department of Public Safety director.

The video release comes two days after hundreds of Uvaldeans marched in triple-digit heat from Robb Elementary School to the city plaza, recently cleared of a memorial to the victims, accompanied by the Brown Berets, a decades-old Chicano social justice organization.

Representatives from the families involved spoke at the event dubbed "Unheard Voices," including 9-year-old AJ Martinez, who was injured in the attack. They repeated their demands for transparency in the investigation and calls for more gun-control measures during hours of heart-wrenching speeches and stories about their lost loved ones.

"If I can't have her, then those who failed her will never know peace," said Kimberly Rubio, whose daughter Alexandria "Lexi" Rubio was killed. "We want answers. We seek justice, and we demand change. We will never rest."

The victims' families sought to memorialize their children. Maite Rodriguez's mother wore a shirt emblazoned with her daughter's name on her back. Her family all wore green Converse shoes and drew a heart on the toe — just like the ones she wore.

Rubio's family carried a framed picture of Alexandria in her softball uniform. Vincent Salazar raised a poster board with his granddaughter's image framed by wings during the march. "It's a joke," 67-year-old Salazar said about the sporadic release of investigative information and political wrangling between the state and local officials over it. "Nobody is communicating with nobody."

Ruben Urrabazo arrived early to the march with his family. His daughter was in the school at the time of the shooting but escaped unharmed — physically. As the group of marchers swelled, a row of Texas Department of Public Safety bicycle officers cycled by the assembly in unison. "Missed you when we needed you," the 32-year-old father yelled their way.

The rage and push for change, Urrabazo said, is unifying the community around all the ways their elected leaders have seemingly ignored them.

"Growing up here, Hispanics are so timid. They're so afraid to speak out, mostly because we live in a border town and a lot of people's families have people who are here illegally," he said. "We should break away from that. We are American citizens. We should not be afraid to voice our concerns."

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HEADLINE	07/12 Uvalde video: police linger school hallway
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/12/uvalde-surveillance-video-police-gunman">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/12/uvalde-surveillance-video-police-gunman</a>
GIST	Surveillance footage captured the gunman in the Uvalde school shooting entering the building with a AR-15-style rifle and later shows officers in body armor milling in the hallway outside the fourth-grade classrooms where 19 children and two teachers were killed.

The video published on Tuesday [by the Austin American-Statesman](#) shows parts of the nearly 80 minutes that passed between the gunman walking into Robb elementary school through an unlocked door and the time when his death put a stop to the US's deadliest school shooting in nearly two decades.

The four-minute video from 24 May shows two officers approaching the classrooms not long after the gunman and then run back amid the sounds of gunfire. It shows officers, some with shields and rifles, massing in the hall before they breached the room and killed the gunman about an hour later.

The edited footage was published as [Texas](#) lawmakers investigating the massacre are preparing to release their findings and show body-camera and surveillance footage to mourning families and other residents of Uvalde.

Officials said the 77 minutes of footage they are [preparing to release this weekend](#) did not contain images of children. The footage has received renewed attention over the past week as anger mounts in Uvalde over an incomplete account about the slow police response and calls for accountability seven weeks after the worst school shooting in Texas history.

Representative Dustin Burrows, a Republican leading an investigation into the shooting, said that the video and findings from a preliminary report would be shown on Sunday in Uvalde to residents and distributed publicly soon after. Later in the day he tweeted: "While I am glad that a small portion is now available for the public, I do believe watching the entire segment of law enforcement's response, or lack thereof, is also important."

The footage published by the Statesman includes 911 tape of a teacher screaming: "Get down! Get in your rooms! Get in your rooms!"

As the gunman approaches the classrooms, a child down the hallway can be seen poking their head around the corner and then running back while shots ring out. Later, about 20 minutes before police breach the room, the video shows a man wearing a vest that says "sheriff" using a hand sanitizer dispenser mounted on the wall.

Burrows said his committee had interviewed more than 40 people behind closed doors over the last several weeks, including law enforcement who were at the scene. He has defended the committee talking with witnesses in private to elicit more candor about what happened.

State police said last week that the Uvalde county district attorney, Christina Busbee, had objected to releasing the video. Busbee has not publicly addressed those claims and did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment left with her office on Tuesday.

State and local officials have previously cited the prosecutor's continuing investigation as a reason they could not release information about the shooting, including body camera footage.

But the video alone will not answer all the questions that remain, nearly two months later, about the law enforcement response. Among them are how the schools police chief, Pete Arredondo, came to the forefront of the huge law enforcement response involving numerous local, state and federal agencies.

State authorities have cast Arredondo as the on-scene commander and said his errors delayed police killing the gunman. Arredondo, however, has told the Texas Tribune he didn't consider himself to be in charge of operations and that he assumed someone else had taken control of the law enforcement response. He did not have a police radio at the time.

The roles of the ranking on-scene officers from other agencies, including the Texas department of public safety, remain unclear. Local officials in Uvalde have accused the state police of repeatedly putting out inaccurate information about the shooting while glossing over the role of its own troopers.

HEADLINE	<b>07/12 King Co. strategies to curtail gun violence</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/king-county-looking-regional-approach-curtail-growing-gun-violence/54MTRSTS3VAQBDCMIXHQ5YLTDA/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/king-county-looking-regional-approach-curtail-growing-gun-violence/54MTRSTS3VAQBDCMIXHQ5YLTDA/</a>
GIST	<p>KING COUNTY, Wash. — In an effort to curtail the rise in gun violence in Seattle and King County, two new strategies are being introduced to help bring down the numbers.</p> <p>The county is working on a two-pronged approach that will bring together groups that blend community and systems, as well as the creation of an immediate response that will help youth and families most affected by gun violence. Fifty percent of those impacted are Black men and boys.</p> <p>According to a report from Public Health – Seattle &amp; King County, homicides are the leading cause of death for young Black men and boys.</p> <p>A 2021 year-end incident report from the King County Prosecutor’s Office revealed there were 1405 total shots fired incidents, which resulted in 460 overall victims. The number of overall shooting victims was up by 70% over a four-year average for 2017-2020.</p> <p>The number of people fatally shot in 2021 was 88, resulting in a 54% increase over an average four-year period for 2017-2020.</p> <p>According to data from Harborview Medical Center, 100 to 150 people between the ages of 16-24 years of age are seen every year in the emergency room for a gun-related injury.</p> <p>With this background data, the county’s regional approach will use high-intensity engagement and support for youth and families in addition to other objectives, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical incident response system with hospital and community based</li> <li>• Wrap around care for high-risk youth via a care team</li> <li>• Support and connection for families &amp; younger siblings</li> <li>• Decreased negative law enforcement contact</li> <li>• Additional community capacity for restorative justice programs</li> <li>• Community outreach, public awareness and restorative events</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<i>To read more on how the county plans to keep the peace together, <a href="#">click here</a>.</i>

HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Fired Pierce Co. deputy trial date set</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article263392898.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article263392898.html</a>
GIST	<p>A Pierce County sheriff’s deputy who was fired last month and captured in California in connection to a felony charge is scheduled to face trial next month.</p> <p>Pierce County prosecutors charged Michael A. Phipps, 49, with first-degree malicious mischief, a class B felony, in May for allegedly causing at least \$50,000 in damage to his family home in Eatonville. He was on the run for about a month and fired by the Sheriff’s Department following his arrest in California in early June.</p> <p>Phipps was arraigned at the end of last month on two additional charges of violating a no-contact order. Prosecutors allege he continued to text and call her after police served him with court papers, according to charging documents. Some of the texts included threats to share explicit photos.</p> <p>Pierce County Superior Court pro tem Judge Brian Tollefson set bail at \$200,000, according to court records. Phipps remains in the Pierce County Jail, and a jury trial is scheduled for Aug. 11.</p> <p>Pierce County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office spokesperson Adam Faber said prosecutors aren’t able to predict whether the trial will go forward as planned. He said the prosecutors’ office does not comment on potential plea negotiations.</p>

Charging documents show that the day Eatonville police say Phipps trashed his family home, officers were at the house attempting to serve him with a court order not to contact his wife. They had been trying to serve him with a temporary protection order since early March 2022.

In an attempt to avoid a potential standoff, Police Chief Jason Laliberte and another officer were parked out of view of the home in hopes of contacting Phipps as he left the neighborhood. Meanwhile, Phipps' wife provided updates about his whereabouts from security cameras.

It appeared Phipps was loading things into a car, but then his wife reported he destroyed a security camera. She also said she thought she saw water leaking from the garage ceiling. He left about 15 minutes later and police found him in a church parking lot.

Laliberte, a former Pierce County sheriff's detective, wrote in a police report he has known Phipps for more than 20 years and shared "words of encouragement" with him before serving him with the protection order.

Phipps said he was at the lowest point in his life.

Eatonville police went back to Phipps' house about two hours later after his wife reported more concerns about a water leak. They discovered the smoke alarms were going off and water was pouring out of light fixtures and vents, among other damage.

Phipps' wife reported he continued to contact her during the next several days despite the court order, according to charging documents.

He told coworkers that he had fled to California. Corona, California, police arrested Phipps at a hotel on June 1 after Laliberte learned where he was staying.

Charging documents do not specify how Laliberte got the information.

Phipps had been a deputy since November 2000 and was granted a leave of absence in June 2021, according to spokesperson Sgt. Darren Moss.

The department notified him in May that he would be put on desk duty if he returned to work.

Moss would not disclose whether Phipps was paid during his leave of absence, citing privacy laws.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Tacoma PD plan to decrease violent crime</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article263393793.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article263393793.html</a>
GIST	<p>In the last 12 months, violent crime in Tacoma has nearly doubled. On Tuesday, Police Chief Avery Moore presented a three-phase plan to decrease it.</p> <p>At the City Council study session, Moore presented the Tacoma Police Department Crime Reduction Plan less than a week after the deadly shooting of a 14-year-old girl.</p> <p>Moore partnered with criminologists at the University of Texas at San Antonio to develop the plan with the goal of reducing the number of victims, increasing community trust and increasing the number of residents who feel safe. The plan is data driven and 100% evidence based, Moore said.</p> <p>"Our overall message is we want you to feel safe," Moore said in an interview following the presentation.</p> <p>Mayor Victoria Woodards said crime is one of the biggest issues facing Tacoma.</p> <p>"Our community needs this, and we need it now evidenced by the loss of a 14-year-old girl, Iyana, last week in our community," she said.</p>



## HOT-SPOT POLICING

Hot-spot policing, the first phase, has started to be implemented across Tacoma. Hot-spot policing will focus on violence-prone addresses (24 addresses account for 12 percent of violent crime in Tacoma) and increase police visibility at or near those locations to deter violent offenders. Police officers will turn on the lights on their cars for 15 minutes per every hour during peak crime hours.

“High visibility does have an impact,” Moore said. “We can’t be everywhere at all times, but where we can be based on our data, that’s where we’re going to be with the idea of making people safe.”

Moore speculated the increase of violent crime was because of the lack of police visibility.

Mike Smith, the criminal justice department chair at UTSA, said during the plan’s presentation that violent crime tends to be concentrated at commercial establishments in Tacoma. He said violence in other larger cities is generally concentrated at multi-family dwellings.

Deputy Mayor Catherine Ushka, the District 4 council member, said her neighbors have told her they are afraid to go outside. She said the messaging of the illuminated lights should be clear to Tacoma residents.

“Right now, if you see lights, it means something terrible is happening and you need to hunker down,” Ushka said.

Moore said in an interview that residents should “read the room” by determining why police are present in a particular area. If a location is “hot” or a crime has recently been committed, police will have put up a barrier and there will be multiple officers. If the officer is hot-spot policing, the officer is likely to be sitting by a shopping strip with their patrol car’s lights on.

The police chief said the hot-spot policing plan is tailored to be successful even with a shortage of police officers. The department is currently down 47 officers, he said.

Rob Tillyer, an UTSA associate professor of criminal justice, said displacement, which is when crime moves elsewhere, generally does not happen with hot-spot policing. The police department with the help of University of Texas at San Antonio will evaluate changes in crime every 90 days to potentially add emerging hot spots and remove “cooled” hot spots.

Smith said it is not unusual that, after an area has cooled off, that it will remain cool for an extended period.

Council member Keith Blocker, who represents District 3, said he wants the Police Department to go beyond hot-spot policing and ensure it is providing resources needed for the community.

“Are we bringing our community resources?” Blocker asked. “Are we doing a career drive? We’re talking about poverty driven, property crime driving areas that are lacking resources... We know that infusing these communities with additional resources will help.”

## PROBLEM-ORIENTED, PLACE-BASED POLICING

The second phase is problem-oriented, place-based policing, which addresses conditions that contribute to recurring problems at crime-prone locations. Tillyer said crime happens in particular areas because there is a vulnerable victim – either a person or a building, a motivated offender and the lack of a capable guardian.

“The goal of this phase is to start to build an understanding of what are the particular things that are going on in this place that cause this opportunity structure to occur,” Tillyer said at the study session.

He added the phase would bring in stakeholders, like the city attorney, Tacoma Public Schools, Metro Parks Tacoma, Public Works and more.

At-large council member Kiara Daniels said she wants the crime-reduction plan to include youth and youth engagement, like through summer programs and after-school programs.

The second phase would be implemented 6 to 12 months after hot-spot policing begins and might have budget requirements.

#### FOCUSED DETERRENCE

Focused deterrence, the third phase, would begin 6 to 12 months after problem-oriented, place-based policing begins. Tacoma Police Department will intervene with repeat and high-risk violent offenders to offer them alternatives to crime with services, including counseling, job training, education, housing, job placement and substance-use treatment. If the offender continues to commit crimes, they will be prosecuted.

“We’re going to weed out the people who need to be weeded out, i.e., go to jail,” Moore said. “... This is about deterring crime, but if you’re not smart enough to know that you shouldn’t commit, then you’re going to jail.”

Council member Joe Bushnell said we cannot stop crime with policing alone, and everyone needs to help to reduce the number of victims. He supported the fact the plan isn’t focused solely on arresting people.

Moore said Tacoma residents could help the plan be successful by being a guardian, as opposed to someone that complains. Policing is inclusive of everybody, he said.

“You don’t have to see it and be hidden,” he said. “It’s always better to let people know, ‘I’ve seen it,’ because people don’t want to get caught.”

Woodards called on Tacoma residents to help turn the corner together, and, if you see something, say something.

Deputy police chief Paul Junger said residents could help by reporting a streetlight out to 311 and picking up trash.

#### EQUITY AND FAIRNESS

The crime-reduction plan is data driven, relies on objective indicators of crime, offending and victimization and is racially and ethnicity-neutral, the criminologist said.

“It doesn’t rely on over-policing,” Smith said. “It doesn’t rely on aggressive and divisive practices like stop and frisk that have been used in other places. It doesn’t rely on racial stereotyping. It doesn’t rely on discretionary practices of the police that have been shown to be problematic in some other places as well.”

Smith said the criminologists will relentlessly evaluate the strategy of the crime reduction plan.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Mexico City police, cartel in huge shootout</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/big-gunbattle-edge-mexico-city-wounds-officers-86707015">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/big-gunbattle-edge-mexico-city-wounds-officers-86707015</a>
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY -- Mexico City police engaged in a shootout Tuesday with more than a dozen gunmen armed with a .50 caliber sniper rifle, grenades and a machine gun, authorities said.</p> <p>City police chief Omar Garcia Harfuch said four officers were wounded, one seriously.</p> <p>He said of total of 150 officers, soldiers and three helicopters participated in the operation, which came after local residents reported that armed men were holding kidnapped people captive in the area.</p>

	<p>Garcia Harfuch said that 14 suspects had been detained and that officers freed two kidnap victims who were apparently being held against their will. He added that “a considerable amount of drugs” were also found near an abandoned restaurant the gang had apparently been using as a safe house.</p> <p>The shootout took place in Topilejo, a town on the city’s rural, southern edge. The pine-covered mountains on the city’s southern rim have long been used by kidnap gangs and other criminals for hideouts.</p> <p>The gunmen opened fire on police as they drove past the safe house on a highway leading to the nearby city of Cuernavaca, the police chief said.</p> <p>He said that the gunmen apparently worked for the Sinaloa cartel, Mexico's most economically powerful gang, and that the kidnappings were not carried out for ransom.</p> <p>Garcia Harfuch is no stranger to the fact that major drug gangs operate in Mexico City.</p> <p>In 2020, some two dozen gunmen ambushed García Harfuch’s armored vehicle before dawn on one of the capital’s main boulevards. The brazen attack left him with three bullet wounds and his two bodyguards and a bystander dead.</p> <p>The police chief blamed the Jalisco New Generation Cartel for the attack.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/12 Dozens dead, injured Haiti’s gang clashes</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/dozens-dead-injured-haitis-capital-gang-clashes-86707876">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/dozens-dead-injured-haitis-capital-gang-clashes-86707876</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Dozens of people have died in four days of gang battles in a violent neighborhood of Haiti's capital, the latest eruption of bloodshed in a wave of increasing violence sweeping the country, local officials said Tuesday.</p> <p>Jean Hislain Frederick, deputy mayor in Cite Soleil district of Port-au-Prince, said that the fighting erupted Friday in a clash between members of two rival gangs and that at least 50 people had died and more than 50 were wounded.</p> <p>The violence began just a day after the first anniversary of the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. Since Moïse was killed, violence has soared in Haiti as gangs battle over territory, and the government has struggled to crack down.</p> <p>The aid group Doctors Without Borders said that thousands of people were trapped in Cite Soleil without drinking water, food and medical care.</p> <p>The organization called on other humanitarian groups for help and it urged the gangs “to spare civilians.” In a press release, it said three of its members were treating wounded people in an area of Cite Soleil called Brooklyn.</p> <p>“Along the only road into Brooklyn, we have encountered corpses that are decomposing or being burned,” Mumuza Muhindo, Doctors Without Borders head of mission in Haiti, said in the statement. “They could be people killed during the clashes or people trying to leave who were shot — it is a real battlefield. It is not possible to estimate how many people have been killed.”</p> <p>Local officials said the fighting involved the rival gangs known as G9 and G-Pep.</p> <p>The G9 is a gang coalition also known as G9 Family and Allies, led by a former police officer, Jimmy Cherizier.</p> <p>Known as “Barbecue,” Cherizier has been linked in the past to massacres, and his coalition is believed to have allied with Moïse’s right-wing party. After the president was killed, he called the crime “cowardly and villainous.”</p>

	<p>G-Pep is a gang that arose in Cite Soleil, although it is allied with other armed groups from around Haiti's capital.</p> <p>The U.N. World Food Program warned Tuesday that hunger is set to rise in Haiti, which is seeing 26% inflation, high costs of food and fuel, and deteriorating security — with insecurity in and around Port-au-Prince drastically worsening since early May.</p> <p>The agency's country director, Jean-Martin Bauer, told U.N. correspondents in a video news conference that 1.3 million Haitians in the northwest and parts of the south "are one step away from famine."</p> <p>Because the criminal groups block roads and attack trucks carrying humanitarian aid, WFP is using ferries and aircraft to deliver desperately needed food, he said.</p> <p>Bauer said the agency needs \$39 million for its operations in Haiti for the next six months, and he urged donors not to let the situation in the country "go from bad to worse."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Michigan state court agrees limit cash bail</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/michigan-state-court-agrees-limit-cash-bail-class/story?id=86662573">https://abcnews.go.com/US/michigan-state-court-agrees-limit-cash-bail-class/story?id=86662573</a>
GIST	<p>The American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan and The Bail Project settled a class action lawsuit with Detroit's 36th District Court, the largest in the state, to limit the use of cash bail in cases where the individual does not pose a danger to the community and is not a flight risk.</p> <p>The agreement would ensure that people would not be jailed because they cannot afford to pay cash bail, with the court limiting its use of cash bail so that it "rarely" results in someone's detention, the ACLU of Michigan said in a statement.</p> <p>"People will not be detained unless, after reviewing evidence presented, a judge determines that releasing a person would create an unmanageable flight risk or danger to the public," according to the ACLU.</p> <p>The settlement resolves a federal lawsuit filed in 2019 on behalf of seven Black residents from Detroit challenging the state's bail system. In the lawsuit, they claimed a person's freedom was dependent on their ability to afford bail and that defendants' right to council was violated because people accused of a crime were not provided counsel during arraignment hearings when their bail was set, according to the ACLU.</p> <p>"This is a great victory that I'm extremely proud to be a part of. Now because of this change, this historical agreement, thousands of us will be spared the hardships of being locked up just because we are poor. We've succeeded in making the criminal legal system in Detroit more fair and just," Starmanie Jackson, one of the plaintiffs, said in a statement.</p> <p>According to the agreement, the court will have to examine a defendant's ability to pay bail and determine, on the record, how much they can afford to pay in any case where cash bail is imposed.</p> <p>Anyone whose income is 200% or less of the federal poverty line is considered not able to afford to pay cash bail, the agreement says. The federal poverty line for a family of four is \$55,500.</p> <p>The use of cash bail to detain criminal defendants while they await trial results in the disproportionate detention of defendants of color, according to the ACLU.</p> <p>"This is a great day for justice in Detroit and Michigan. Thousands of people in Detroit will no longer be languishing behind bars simply because they are too poor to pay for their freedom. The cash bail system has devastating consequences on communities, particularly communities of color," Phil Mayor, a senior staff attorney at ACLU Michigan, said in a statement.</p>

Defendants given bail that is supposed to be "affordable" are entitled to a bail redetermination hearing within 48 to 72 hours where they can challenge the decision to detain them, according to the agreement.

Everyone going through an arraignment in the court will also be entitled to court-appointed counsel unless they waive that right or retain a private attorney, according to the agreement.

Arraignment counsel will be required to fill out a form stating the defendant's financial situation to ensure they have information necessary to make arguments about the individual's ability to pay bail, according to the agreement.

All attorneys appointed to the court will be required to get four hours of training on how to handle a bail hearing, bail determination procedures and the terms of the agreement, according to the agreement.

All defense attorneys who will be appearing in the court will begin their training next week and Judges and magistrates will begin their training in the next few weeks, 36th District Court Chief Judge William McConico told ABC News in an interview.

McConico said he is "Enthusiastically looking towards implementing this settlement."

The agreement states that defendants who miss a hearing for most misdemeanor cases will have their hearing automatically rescheduled instead of a warrant being issued for their arrest the first time they miss a hearing.

It will also require the court to report release rates to the plaintiffs on a bimonthly basis. Per the agreement, 97% of people accused of misdemeanors, 90% of people accused of felonies and 80% of people accused of certain serious felonies should be released without cash bail or with an amount of bail they can afford within 24 hours, according to the agreement.

While McConico said the court's current release rates are somewhat near these thresholds for traffic and misdemeanors, it is "nowhere near the numbers in the settlement agreement" for felonies.

The agreement does not set a release rate for people accused of crimes including murder, treason, first degree criminal sexual conduct, armed robbery, kidnapping, or who are accused of committing a violent felony while already released on bond or probation/parole, or who are accused of committing a violent felony and have twice been convicted of violent felonies in the previous 15 years, according to the agreement.

This agreement will last from two to five years. If the court successfully meets the release rates, the agreement will expire in two years. But, it will be extended if the court misses any release rates.

"I am proud that 36th District Court, thanks in large part to the work of Judge Larry Williams, collaborated to create a more equitable justice system. While other cities took a more hostile posture, we felt it was important to work together to find a solution," McConico said in a statement.

While McConico has not spoken to judges from other courts in Michigan, he hopes implementation of this agreement will encourage other courts in the state to implement similar cash bail policies.

"If we can do it in Detroit you can do it anywhere in the state," McConico said.

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HEADLINE	07/12 TX outlets publish disturbing Uvalde video
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/texas-lawmaker-plans-release-uvalde-surveillance-video/story?id=86667822">https://abcnews.go.com/US/texas-lawmaker-plans-release-uvalde-surveillance-video/story?id=86667822</a>
GIST	Two Texas news outlets have published disturbing surveillance video from inside Robb Elementary School during the May 24 <a href="#">mass shooting</a> , as Uvalde officials and families debate the sensitive footage's release.

[Austin ABC affiliate KVUE](#) and the [Austin American-Statesman](#) both released an edited portion of the never-before-seen footage on Tuesday, ahead of the planned release of the video by state lawmakers.

"Both media outlets have elected to release that footage Tuesday to provide transparency to the community, showing what happened as officials waited to enter that classroom," KVUE stated in its article on the footage, which shows the gunman walking into the school building and officers responding three minutes later.

The edited surveillance footage shows dozens of law enforcement officers, including some with protective shields, waiting in the hallway. Officers didn't breach the classroom for more than 70 minutes, even as four additional shots were fired from the classrooms 45 minutes after police arrived on the scene, the footage released by the news organizations shows.

The release comes hours after a key state lawmaker in Texas vowed Tuesday to release surveillance video from inside the school, a move he says is intended to provide transparency to the families of the 21 victims despite guidance from the local district attorney that the footage remain under wraps.

Rep. Dustin Burrows, the chairman of a special Texas House panel investigating the school shooting, [tweeted](#) early Tuesday that his committee planned to meet with members of the Uvalde community this coming Sunday to "provide them an opportunity to see the hallway video and discuss our preliminary report."

"Very soon thereafter, we will release both to the public," Burrows added.

In the wake of the reporting from KVUE and the Austin American-Statesman on Tuesday, Burrows expressed his disappointment at the release of the footage.

"The committee is aware a portion of the hallway video has been made public. While I am glad that a small portion is now available for the public, I do believe watching the entire segment of law enforcement's response, or lack thereof, is also important," he wrote on Twitter. "I am also disappointed the victim's families and the Uvalde community's requests to watch the video first, and not have certain images and audio of the violence, were not achieved."

Burrows' pledge to release the video and its partial release by the news organizations cap a [dizzying weekend spat](#) among state officials, law enforcement agencies and Uvalde's mayor about how to handle sensitive investigative materials, including hallway surveillance footage purportedly showing the police response to the shooting.

Officials with the Texas Department of Public Safety have expressed tepid support for releasing the hallway footage, but say they have resisted doing so at the urging of Uvalde-area District Attorney Christina Busbee, whose investigation into the shooting remains ongoing. Busbee has not responded to requests for comment from ABC News.

Late Monday, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, who is running for reelection, joined Burrows and Uvalde's mayor, Don McLaughlin, in calling for the footage to be made public.

In a statement obtained Tuesday by KVUE, Abbott's office said the governor "is disheartened and disappointed that this video was leaked before the victims' families and the Uvalde community -- those most affected by this tragedy -- had the opportunity to view it."

"The governor has been clear since day one that he expects all information surrounding the tragedy at Robb School Elementary to be released, and we do appreciate that the Uvalde community is getting answers," it continued. "The investigations being conducted by the Texas Rangers and the FBI are ongoing, and we look forward to the full results being shared with the victims' families and the public, who deserve the full truth of what happened that tragic day."



While in favor of its release, McLaughlin expressed anger Tuesday that the footage was leaked ahead of Sunday's meeting, saying that families were "blindsided."

"They need to see the video, but they don't need to see the gunman going in there. They don't need to listen to those gunshots. They know what happened in that classroom. Why put them through that?" he told ABC News. "And half of these families are out of town right now in Washington, D.C., not even with the rest of their family [...] I'm sorry. That's wrong. These families were blindsided and it shouldn't have been done this way."

Families of children [who were killed in the massacre](#) also spoke out in anger, demanding answers for the leak.

"They weren't supposed to do it without our consent," Javier Cazares, the father of 9-year-old Jacklyn Cazares, said during a press briefing Tuesday night.

Several of the families who were meeting with lawmakers hours before in Washington, D.C., said they had not seen the video -- despite repeated requests.

"We've been asking the DA for this video for a while and she refused to let us see it," Nikki Cross, the mother of 10-year-old Uziyah Garcia, said. "So once again, the world got to see it before us."

Kimberly Mata-Rubio, the mother of 10-year-old Alexandria Aniyah Rubio, said families didn't want the video published until they were able to view it on Sunday.

"We understand that the media -- it wants to hold people accountable because the government hasn't been transparent with us," Mata-Rubio said. "You don't need the audio for that."

"We have to tell our family back home to not watch the news," she added. "It's unacceptable."

The confusion over the video's release has [exacerbated frustration](#) within the Uvalde community and among family members of the victims, who have criticized law enforcement for their response to the shooting and subsequent handling of the investigation. Texas Department of Public Safety Director Steve McCraw characterized the police response as "an abject failure" during testimony before a [Texas Senate panel](#) last month.

McCraw reiterated that assessment on Tuesday while also saying he was "deeply disappointed" at the video's release before all impacted families could view it.

"Those most affected should have been among the first to see it," he said in a statement. "As I stated during my testimony before the Senate Special Committee to Protect All Texans, this video provides horrifying evidence that the law enforcement response to the attack at Robb Elementary on May 24 was an abject failure."

McCraw and his agency have also [faced scrutiny](#) for releasing incorrect or, at times, contradictory information about the police response.

Seven weeks after the shooting, [numerous questions](#) remain about the 77 minutes that elapsed between the time the shooter entered the school and the moment law enforcement officers breached a classroom and killed him.

Families of the victims say they hope the surveillance footage provides some clarity.

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